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ABSTRACT

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES FACED BY SINGLE, DIVORCED MOTHERS THROUGH A DIVORCE RECOVERY GROUP IN THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OXFORD, FLORIDA

David William Harper

A twelve-week divorce recovery group was planned and implemented to determine whether such a group would be an effective means of addressing the needs of single, divorced mothers. Specifically, the goals of the group were to provide understanding and resolution to the issues faced by single, divorced mothers as they adjust to life in the post-divorce family, to provide support during the crisis, and an opportunity for growth.

The issues concerning divorce and life in the post-divorce family are identified in the review of literature in chapter two. This material was condensed and provided the content for the twelve weekly sessions. It was presented to the five participants in the form of short reading assignments along with essay questions designed to help them prepare for the following week's discussion. A summary of these twelve sessions is found in chapter three.

In evaluating the group's effectiveness, the writer utilized his own observations as group leader, the participants' written responses to the essay questions, their verbal responses during the discussions, and their weekly evaluation sheets. The Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, a 100= question inventory, was also used to help the participants mark their progress. The study concludes with the writer's recommendations

regarding changes in the content and presentation of the material as well as his plans for using divorce recovery groups in his future ministry.

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DIVORCE RECOVERY GROUP IN THE FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF OXFORD, FLORIDA

BY

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AUTHORIZATION

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Signed

David W. Harper

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CHAPTER 1

Divorce and the Church

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to deal with the nature and scope of this project/dissertation. It will set forth the subject matter, explaining the reasons for pursuing this subject and will establish the limitations of the study. The writer's theoretical framework will be presented along with a description of how the project was planned, implemented, and evaluated.

In his article, "Questions of Consequences," Arlo Newell says, "How the church deals with the great issues of the present will have lasting consequences for our ministry in the future. . . . The authenticity of the church is revealed in its willingness to minister to every human need."¹ Some of the most perplexing problems facing the church today are those surrounding the issue of divorce.

The First Baptist Church of Oxford is a 270-resident member congregation in rural Central Florida. Among its members, approximately fifty have experienced divorce and many others were raised in what were once called "broken homes." As their pastor, the writer has spent many hours counseling them.

Demographer Paul C. Glick of the Bureau of the Census estimates that

¹ Arlo F. Newell, "Questions of Consequence," Christianity Today, 10 June 1979, p. 7.

"by 1990, close to one-third of the children might be expected to experience a parent's divorce before they reach the age of 18."² Latest indications are that the divorce rate may at last be leveling off.³ Whether this occurs or not, the church will continue to find large numbers of divorced persons and their children in our midst.

The writer first began to think about the subject of divorce during his days of preparation for the ministry. It was the source of many a heated theological discussion. After entering the ministry in 1978, he soon began to realize that much of his thinking on the subject had been limited to questions such as if and when divorce is Biblically permissible.

Until then, he had seen divorce as a theological issue, an exegetical problem. But the problem of divorce comes into the pastor's study with names and faces; it is a people problem.

All divorce is a tragic falling short of the happiness and fulfillment God intended for marriage. It is a painful manifestation of our sinfulness and fallenness. Theological considerations aside, the real question facing the church is, "How can we effectively minister to the divorced and their families?"

This question was first brought to my attention in an unexpected but powerful way while conversing with a psychotherapist about a

² Paul C. Glick, "Children of Divorced Parents in Demographic Perspective," Journal of Social Issues, 35, No. 4 (1979), 175.

³ Paul C. Glick and Sung-Ling Lin, "Recent Changes in Divorce and Remarriage," Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48 (Nov. 1986), 738.

divorcing church member who was also a patient of hers. When asked, "What can we as the church do to help?" she replied that we were "the most valuable support group in her client's life," though obviously we didn't realize it. If this is possible, what should the church be doing intentionally to minister to the divorced? This project/dissertation is an attempt to answer that question.

Statement of the Subject

The purpose of this project/dissertation is to report the experiences of the writer as he leads a divorce recovery group for single, divorced mothers in discussing the problems of adjusting to life in the post-divorce family.

Definition of Terms

A divorce recovery group is a short-term growth group whose goals are described by Sara Bonkowski and Brenda Wanner-Westly as "to facilitate group members' understanding of and resolution for specific issues related to their divorce, to provide needed emotional support during the stressful time, and to change potential tragedy into a growth opportunity."⁴ This definition will serve as a guide in evaluating the group's effectiveness in chapter four.

The Congregational Reflection Group (C.R.G.) is a group of four men and four women, all members of our church. The purpose of this group

⁴ Sara E. Bonkowski and Brenda Wanner-Westly, "The Divorce Group: A New Treatment Modality," Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 60 (Nov. 1979), 552.

is to provide guidance and encouragement to the pastor throughout the Doctor of Ministry program. This group also assisted in designing and implementing this project.

A large segment of adults within the church today is comprised of single, divorced mothers. Some of their problems are common to all singles and to all parents, but many are unique and require special attention. Thus, the focus will remain on single, divorced mothers. This study is also limited in its intent. It is designed not for professional counselors but rather for professional and lay leaders within the framework of the local church.

Expectations

The writer is deeply touched by the hurts and needs of divorced families. He has also seen that God's grace is indeed sufficient and that divorce does not automatically consign people or their children to a lifetime of pain and misery.

Divorce is a crisis which often requires professional help. However, since divorce often entails financial hardship, such help is not always affordable. Much has been written on the subject, but much of this material is tucked away in professional journals. Even popular books such as those by Richard Gardner do not always find their way into the hands of busy single parents.

The writer sees the divorce recovery group as a means of helping bridge this professional gap. It is viewed as a means of ministering in a concrete way to those facing the challenges of life in the post-divorce family.

In the summer of 1983, the writer enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. The three-week seminars were a powerful lesson in the effectiveness of small groups in facilitating both learning and personal growth. The writer sees this project as a means of learning more about the needs of the divorced and sharpening his own skills in the use of small groups.

Biblical/Theological Perspective

In an attempt to understand better the issues and concerns facing single, divorced mothers, the writer examined much of the current literature from the fields of psychology, sociology, and counseling--both Christian and secular. The insights from these disciplines are helpful, but their understanding and application are within the expectation of the pastoral role. The truths of Scripture are given the final word and applied wherever possible.

The writer is well aware of the broad range of theological opinions among Southern Baptists and other Evangelicals regarding divorce. As one committed to the Baptist concept of soul competency, he respects and even welcomes such honest differences of opinion. However, he also realizes that what one believes about divorce and about divorced persons will greatly affect the kind of pastoral care he or she is able to offer them.

Marriage and Divorce Defined

Jay Adams defines marriage as "a covenant of companionship."⁵ This

⁵ Jay E. Adams, Divorce and Remarriage (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), p. 11.

definition recognizes both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of marriage. Ideally, marriage is a covenant for life. This the church has traditionally affirmed. But the Bible also recognizes the qualitative aspects of marriage as companionship. Does the Bible then demand that couples stay legally married at all cost? Like the Sabbath, marriage was meant to bless mankind. One might ask as our Lord did about the Sabbath whether God made man for marriage or marriage for man.

Divorce is the breaking of this covenant and of God's ideal. What is recognized as the final decree is but a legal acknowledgement of what has already taken place, namely, the death of the marriage. Following is a brief examination of key scriptural texts regarding divorce.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord.

The King James Version of this text can be misleading. As Donald W. Shaner points out, "verses 1-3 form the protasis (the condition of the case contemplated) and verse 4, the main clause, is the apodosis (the decision for action in the case defined)."⁶ The New International Version reflects this understanding by correctly placing the word "then"

⁶ Donald W. Shaner, A Christian View of Divorce (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1969), p. 35.

at the beginning of verse 4 rather than in the middle of the first verse as in the KJV.

This being so, Deuteronomy 24 is not a law providing for divorce. Moses was simply restricting the customary practice of divorce in what Adams refers to as an apparent effort "to discourage foolish and hasty divorce actions."⁷

Deuteronomy 24 is actually a law regarding remarriage, not divorce. The Law of Moses did forbid divorce, but only in certain cases such as when a man falsely accused his wife of not being a virgin when they married. (See Deut. 22:13-19.) This implies that Moses could have also forbidden divorce or at least severely limited it. Obviously, it was tolerated in most cases.

Some insist that this law was a mere concession, citing Jesus' words in Matthew 19:8. However, the divorce described in Deuteronomy 24 did dissolve the marriage freeing the woman to be "the wife of another man" (v.2). Even if she remarried, her first husband was referred to as "her former husband" (v.4, KJV).

These considerations are important because many see the New Testament as allowing divorce in certain cases while contending that all others are not divorces "in God's sight." Since the parties are really still married, any remarriage is judged by them to be adulterous.

⁷ Adams, Divorce and Remarriage, p. 31.

Matthew 5:31,32

It has been said, "Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce." But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery.

Many, such as Guy Duty, use this text to show that only the one who is "the proven-innocent in divorce"⁸ may remarry without sinning. A close examination of the context will show otherwise.

Jesus' declaration must be understood in light of his words in verse 17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." He then offers numerous examples of how in keeping the letter of the Law, the legalists of his day had missed the true spirit of the Law:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement," But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. . . . You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth," But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (Matt. 5:21,22a, 38-40).

In light of this, it is questionable why Duty and others see Jesus as "the New Testament Lawgiver."⁹ If the Sermon on the Mount is a new "law," then we must also gouge out offending eyes (v.29) and never say "No" to potential borrowers (v.42). Yet, verses 31 and 32 are often taken as law and used to justify cases where a wife divorces her husband for his infidelity. But if Matthew 5 is followed strictly as law, then

⁸ Guy Duty, Divorce and Remarriage (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1967), p. 15

⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

only the husband may justly divorce his wife.

The textual problem concerning the exception clause ("except for marital unfaithfulness" v.31) omitted by Luke and Mark is discussed in great detail in Shaner's book.¹⁰ It should be noted that as problematic as his approach may be for one who has a high view of inspiration, the writer finds the attempts of some to harmonize the Gospels equally problematic.

Matthew 19:3-11

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they no longer are two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given."

Here our Lord is asked about what constitutes a lawful cause for divorce. Jesus, not surprisingly, avoids this trap by appealing not to the Law of Moses, but to the creation narrative of Genesis 2. When the Pharisees pressed for an answer (citing Deuteronomy 24), he replied that this was "permitted . . . because your hearts were hard. But it was not

¹⁰ Shaner, A Christian View of Divorce, pp. 43-66.

this way from the beginning" (v.8). He then repeats essentially what he said in Matthew 5.

According to Jesus, the Law permitted divorce because their hearts were hard--as a lesser of evils. Larry Richards points out that "law" has never been the highest standard. He sees what is usually considered a mere concession as something positive, as "evidence that God is willing to accomodate his ideal to the sinfulness of man."¹¹

Here is where the discussion often stops. However, verses 10 and 11 are most instructive. By reiterating the ideal and by setting forth but one possible exception, Jesus seems to be setting an unrealistic standard. The disciples apparently understood his words this way. "If this is the situation," they said, "it is better not to marry" (v.10).

They assumed, as do some today, that Jesus was setting forth a new and even more stringent law. But Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given" (v.11). This seems to be the Lord's way of again accomodating his ideal to our inability to live up to that ideal.

I Corinthians 7:10,11

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconcilled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

Here the apostle Paul addresses the case of two believers. He

¹¹ Larry Richards, Remarriage: A Healing Gift from God (Waco, TX: Word, 1981), p. 34.

says the wife is to remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. Why does Paul say this? Again, the context must be considered.

In verse 26 he speaks of "the present crisis" and his warnings in verses 26-28 are offered to spare his readers "many troubles in this life" (v.28). He goes on to say, "the time is short" (v.29). Shaner describes verses 29-31 as Paul's "eschatological conditioning."¹² In light of this he advises the Corinthians to remain single as he is (vs. 7, 32-40).

These factors--the imminence of Christ's return and the impending persecution--seem to provide the rationale for much of Paul's teaching in this chapter. Therefore, the writer questions the wisdom of applying verses 10 and 11 in a legalistic manner today while ignoring Paul's other exhortations. To do so may generate new and even more complex dilemmas.

For example, Duty sees Paul's advice to "remain unmarried" (v.11) as proof positive that the marriage bond had never been dissolved. It must have been an "unscriptural divorce"¹³ or she would not have been told this, he says. Aside from the fact that this only begs the question, such logic later leads Duty to this conclusion: "Divorce for adultery sets both parties free."¹⁴ Why? Because "when there is valid

¹² Shaner, A Christian View of 'Divorce, p. 91.

¹³ Duty, Divorce and Remarriage, p. 93.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 139.

ground for divorce, the marriage is dissolved for both parties."¹⁵

The couple in verses 10 and 11, though legally divorced, were still married "in God's sight." Neither could remarry. Following Duty's line of reasoning, the writer concludes that if one party had experienced a greater moral failure (by committing adultery), they both would have been completely free to remarry.

Remarriage

This raises the question of remarriage. Divorce is always a breaking of the covenant and of God's ideal. It is sinful to be sure, but to speak of people as "still married in God's sight" is not Biblical. It is largely a Roman Catholic notion based on a misunderstanding of Jesus' words, "what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:6).

In discussing these texts, it has been shown that adopting a legalistic approach often creates more problems than it solves. Such an approach may serve only to isolate the text, rendering it useless.

The same holds true for remarriage. The Bible is largely silent on the "right" to remarry, not because it is disallowed, but because it is implicit in the concept of divorce itself. The Bible's recognition and regulation of divorce point to the writer's contention that divorce does sever the marriage bond. But dare we even speak of remarriage as a "right?" This seems to place the matter back in a legalistic framework--as if some (the "innocent parties") have the right while the rest do not.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

Dwight Small sees Jesus' treatment of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) as a useful model. Here is one who, like the divorced, had clearly broken God's ideal. What is noteworthy is how Jesus responded to her. We learn that "Jesus' response to failure is conditioned by grace."¹⁶ Small goes on to say,

The justification for remarriage in God's sight must arise from the reality of grace. Remarriage is always related to the renewing grace of God, which meets a person in his or her failure and grants another chance. This is not only true of the "innocent party," but the "guilty party" as well. For grace to be grace means that there is no intrinsic justification at all, no "right" which enters the picture to guide our evaluation and action. ¹⁷ It is not a matter of personal right, but of God's grace in Christ.

Conclusion

The key issue is not one's interpretation of the Bible, but how one views the Bible itself. This writer holds a very high view of the inspiration of the Bible. But many who share this view conclude that the Bible is an "owner's manual" of sorts designed to give clear and concise directions for every problem imaginable. A good example of this viewpoint is that held by the popular conference speaker, Bill Gothard.¹⁸

The Bible is the final authority in matters of faith and practice, but only when properly understood and applied. As Old Testament scholar John Bright points out, "The Bible is not a rule book or a dictionary. It cannot, therefore, be used as if it were no more than a vast

¹⁶ Dwight Hervey Small, The Right To Remarry (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1975), p. 180.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

¹⁸ Wilfred Bockelman, Gothard: The Man and His Ministry (Santa Barbara, CA: Quill Publications, 1976), pp. 45-59.

collection of proof texts. . . . That is a misuse of the Bible's authority."¹⁹

This is not to suggest that the Bible is irrelevant. On the contrary, as attractive as the legalistic approach is in offering to simplify the complexities of life, such an approach actually stifles the Bible's ability to speak with clarity and relevance. By promising more than it can deliver, this approach often muddies the theological waters. This is seen in the confusing ways divorce is often viewed.

Divorce is sin. Every divorce involves a sinful falling short of God's ideal of one man and one woman living in a lifetime covenant of companionship. Therefore, it is meaningless (if not impossible) to determine "the innocent party." As Richards points out, "'Is it lawful?' is the wrong question. . . . The right question is this: Is there any way to heal the hurt of broken commitments?"²⁰

The answer is a resounding "Yes!" The worst that can be said about divorce is also the best: It is sinful. If it is, then it is forgivable. Adams expresses this sentiment by saying,

What God has cleansed no man must call unclean. Christ is bigger than our sin--even our sin of adultery and divorce. We minimize Christ when we speak and act as if this were not so. These sins are truly heinous; we must not minimize that fact either. But Christ is greater than sin--all sin. We don't minimize sin or its effects,²¹ then; we always maximize Christ and the power of His Cross.

¹⁹ John Bright, The Authority of The Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), p. 47.

²⁰ Richards, Remarriage, pp. 37,38.

²¹ Adams, Divorce, p. 94.

God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). He hates its causes and its results. Now more than ever, the church must continue to uphold and teach the Biblical values of marriage and family living. The church can maintain this high standard and still express concern and acceptance toward those whose marriages are over.

Pastors, theologians, and church leaders must continue to pursue a sound theology of divorce. But as Lewis R. Rambo, a divorced Church of Christ minister notes,

Whatever the theological problems surrounding divorce and remarriage, the church has to respond. Divorce is a fact of modern life; it affects people in every church in the United States. Any church that doesn't face this reality is avoiding the needs of its own congregation and neglecting a vast number of people in need of its ministry.²²

Planning and Implementing The Divorce Recovery Group

The writer and the C.R.G. sought to gain a better understanding of the problems facing single, divorced mothers by examining the current literature on the subject. The review of related literature in chapter two is a summary of their findings and much of this material was incorporated into the weekly group sessions.

In order to give each session a definite focus as well as to facilitate the discussions, the writer and the C.R.G. designed weekly homework assignments. These consisted of short reading assignments along with several essay questions. These assignments were handed in at the end of each session and returned the following week along with the writer's

²² Lewis R. Rambo, The Divorcing Christian (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p. 41.

comments. A sample of a completed homework assignment is found in Appendix B.

The material was divided into twelve units. A summary of the twelve group sessions is found in chapter three. In chapter four, the writer will evaluate the effectiveness of the divorce recovery group utilizing the homework responses, evaluation sheets, the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, and his own observations. Chapter five concludes the project/dissertation with a summary of the findings and recommendations for the future use of this material.

CHAPTER 2

Life In the Post-divorce Family

Introduction

Couples divorce for many reasons. Most expect to achieve a happier and more satisfying way of life. However, Archibald Hart estimates that even after five years, only one-fourth of divorced persons are "resilient, managing to cope adequately"; half are "just barely coping"; and the other fourth "are either failing to recover or looking back with intense longing to the time before the divorce, wishing the divorce had never taken place."¹

The writer has often wondered why so few divorced persons give serious thought to the divorce process, for it sometimes leads to a repeating of past mistakes. This may partly explain why more second marriages end in divorce than first marriages.²

Bruce Fisher challenges the divorced to use their divorce "as motivation to grow and make the crisis into an opportunity, rather than an experience that leaves . . . wounds that never heal."³ Crucial to a successful recovery is the divorced person's understanding of what happened and what to expect in the future. This chapter is a review of the

¹ Archibald D. Hart, Children and Divorce (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), p. 35.

² Linda Bird Francke, Growing Up Divorced (New York: Linden, 1983), p. 30.

³ Bruce Fisher, Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends (San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact, 1981), p. 32.

literature related to the needs of the divorced and their children.

The Decision to Marry

Whether remarriage is a future consideration or not, divorced persons need a clear understanding of why they selected their mate and why they chose to marry. According to Bruce Eckland, "Mate selection is not simply a matter of preference or choice. . . . There are a host of factors, many well beyond the control of the individual, which severely limit the number of eligible person from which to choose."⁴

Marriage, then, is a choice but a choice within limits. Thomas and Virginia Ktsanes include in these limits such factors as "social class, ethnic background, educational level, religion, occupation and area of residence."⁵ They go on to say that these are merely "limits within which another principle of selection may operate."⁶

One of these principles is the theory of homogamy, that "likes attract"⁷ This phenomenon is easily observed in married couples. According to Herman R. Lantz and Eloise Snyder, most research findings "tend to support the homogamous hypothesis in that it appears that like tends to

⁴ Bruce K. Eckland, "Theories of Mate Selection," in Love Marriage and Family: A Developmental Approach, Marcia E. Lasswell and Thomas E. Lasswell, eds. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 238.

⁵ Thomas Ktsanes and Virginia Ktsanes, "The Theory of Complementary Needs in Mate-Selection," in Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family, 2nd rev. ed. Robert F. Winch et al., eds. (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 519.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Eckland, op, cit., p. 240.

marry likes."⁸ Eckland counters by pointing to the impossibility of knowing whether the resemblance among couples "was the basis for their initial attraction ('birds of a feather flock together') or whether the correlations were simply an outgrowth of the marital experience."⁹

Perhaps likes do attract, but as Lantz and Snyder point out, "We must recognize that similarity of background alone is no assurance against difficulties in the man-woman relationship. Indeed, it frequently disguises the existence of some very serious problems."¹⁰

Another theory of mate selection is Robert Winch's theory of complimentary needs which hypothesizes that "each individual seeks that person who will provide him with maximum need gratification."¹¹ According to this theory, selection is made "on the basis of each person's ability to satisfy 'opposite kinds of needs' in each other."¹²

The Ktsanes list a number of complementary needs such as abasement (the need to accept blame or punishment), deference (the need to admire and praise a person), and succorance (the need to be helped, nursed or protected).¹³ Perhaps opposites attract, but as Lantz and Snyder again

⁸ Herman R. Lantz and Eloise C. Snyder, Marriage: An Examination of the Man-Woman Relationship, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969), p. 214.

⁹ Eckland, loc. cit.

¹⁰ Lantz and Snyder, op. cit., p. 217.

¹¹ Eckland, loc. cit.

¹² Lantz and Snyder, op. cit., p. 218.

¹³ Ktsanes and Ktsanes, op. cit., pp. 522-23.

point out, "Complimentariness may not necessarily be conducive to the development of a mature relationship."¹⁴

The reasons two people are attracted to one another are numerous and may include dynamics neither person is aware of. Most people simply know they are "in love." Duane Windemiller says, "Romantic love characterizes contemporary mate selection in America more than any other single thing."¹⁵ Lantz and Snyder add that "to fall in love is relatively easy, since it is often based primarily on sexual considerations; to remain in love requires the ability to build and maintain a stable relationship."¹⁶ Included in their work are a comparison between mature and immature love (See Appendix D.) and a list of characteristics related to marital success and failure. (See Appendix E.)

Another factor affecting the mate selection process is family background. One's own parents provide "models about the nature of family life, as well as images of what a father, mother, husband, or wife ought to be."¹⁷ This can start a chain reaction "in which poor family relationships tend to create emotionally unstable personalities, who in turn may be motivated to marry for reasons that are not conducive to building a successful marriage."¹⁸ In his own counseling experience, the writer has

¹⁴ Lantz and Snyder, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁵ Duane Windemiller, Sexuality, Pairing, and Family Forms (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop, 1976), p. 242.

¹⁶ Lantz and Snyder, op cit., p. 102.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 226-27

noticed that many make poor choices in deciding when and whom to marry, but they have no idea why. Others assume they made a poor choice when, in reality, one or both parties simply lacked the skills or strength to grow and mature in the marriage.

Yet, three out of every four divorced women and five out of every six divorced men will eventually remarry.¹⁹ These men and women need to understand the dynamics of their first marriage beginning with the decision to marry and the choice of a mate, for as Lantz and Snyder note, "The motivations for marriage are important determinants of what a person expects from marriage and the quality of the relationship that follows."²⁰

The Decision to Divorce

The decision to divorce, like the decision to marry, is also complicated. It begins with what J. Louise Despert calls emotional divorce: "That divorce which exists in the hearts of one or both partners."²¹ The dynamics of the decision are described in various ways. Jim Smoke and Bruce Fisher, both counselors who have been divorced, offer two different but helpful models. (See Appendixes F and G.)

The Positive Aspects of Divorce

Divorced persons need to examine carefully their decisions to marry and divorce. Of even greater importance is how they view their present

¹⁹ Francke, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁰ Lantz and Snyder, op. cit., p. 94.

²¹ J. Louise Despert, Children of Divorce (1953; rpt. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Dolphin Books, 1962), p. 7

state and their future as single adults. The marriage is over, but its ending is a crisis that begins a process that can lead to a better way of life.

As a crisis, divorce can result in either "negative disruption" or "creative regenesis,"²² depending largely on how the divorced person views it. Anita Morawetz and Gillian Walker speak of two views commonly held by those who deal with single-parent families: "The first view sees the single-parent family as basically a deviant unit. . . . The second view attempts to balance this perceived prejudice by denying all differences."²³

The church, consciously or not, tends to foster the first view. According to Daniel A. Calvin, the standard conception of the American family is a "white, middle-class, monogamous, father-at-work, mother-and-children-at-home-family living in a suburban one-family house."²⁴

Part of the problem with how they view their lives lies with the divorced themselves. This is especially true of those who married at a young age. Never having formed a personal identity, such persons may lose their identity during a divorce. Toni L'Hommedieu speaks of women

²² Gary W. Peterson and Helen K. Clemenshaw, "Families During the Divorce Crisis: An Integrative Review with Clinical Implications," in Family Strengths, Nick Stinnett et al., eds. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 432.

²³ Anita Morawetz and Gillian Walker, Brief Therapy With Single-Parent Families (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1984), p. 42.

²⁴ Daniel A. Calvin, "Joint Custody: As Family and Social Policy," in Children of Separation and Divorce, Irving R. Stuart and Lawrence Edwin Abt, eds. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981), p. 101.

for whom the "destruction of the marriage meant a destruction of the family."²⁵

A better way of understanding the post-divorce family, and one that avoids these extremes, is described by Cynthia Longfellow. Instead of seeing divorce as a "breaking" of the home, she suggests we see it "as a reorganization process from a two-parent to a single-parent family unit."²⁶

Of course, simply changing labels will not ease the difficulties of life for single parents. If the reorganization process is to be successful, they need to see divorce not only as an ending but as a new beginning. Many of the single parents Judith Wallerstein and Joan Kelly worked with described divorce as "an opportunity to start anew, to write the outline of the next chapter in their lives with some degree of thoughtful reflection and control."²⁷

Viewed from this perspective, divorce can be an opportunity for

²⁵ Toni L'Hommedieu, The Divorce Experience of Working and Middle Class Women (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984). p. 100.

²⁶ Cynthia Longfellow, "Divorce in Context: Its Impact on Children," in Divorce and Separation, George Levinger and Oliver C. Moles, eds. (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 21.

²⁷ Judith S. Wallerstein and Joan Berlin Kelly, Surviving The Breakup (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 157

personal growth. As Morton Hunt explains,

The greatest spurts of personality growth and reorganization occur during periods of crisis and psychological upheaval. Some psyches are permanently damaged by emotional crisis, but most react as the body does to exercise or effort--with an outpouring of energy and an increase of strength.²⁸

This is easily seen in the area of self-esteem. Divorce is usually devastating to one's self-esteem. The events leading up to the divorce, the sense of failure, and feelings of rejection contribute to the problem. Yet, according to Bruce Fisher, "This crisis of divorce may force us to look at our self-concept and make a decision to do something about improving how we feel about ourselves."²⁹

Divorced persons may discover through the pain of divorce that their self-image was based on their relationship to their mate or their ability to maintain a successful marriage. The recovery process can be an opportunity to build (or rebuild) a self-concept that does not depend on someone else. As Paul Bohannon says, "Each must regain--if he ever had it--the dependence on self and faith in one's capacity to cope with the environment, with people, with thoughts and emotions."³⁰

This is especially true of single, divorced mothers who may have been overly dependent on their husbands. The new responsibilities of maintaining a home by themselves can cause them to feel even more

²⁸ Morton M. Hunt, The World of the Formerly Married (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 47

²⁹ Bruce Fisher, When Your Relationship Ends (San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact, 1984), p. 59.

³⁰ Paul Bohannon, "The Six Stations of Divorce," in Love Marriage Family: A Developmental Approach, Marcia E. Lasswell and Thomas E. Lasswell, eds. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 488.

inadequate. However, as Janet A. Kohen, Carol A. Brown, and Roslyn Feldberg state, "Taking on new responsibilities and doing unfamiliar tasks with little social support are not easy, but the experience of making decisions and mastering tasks forms the basis of a new, more satisfying self-concept."³¹

For single, divorced mothers, finances are often a new responsibility. The task of providing for one's family is even more difficult due to lowered income. But with this stress there is also greater freedom and control over the family budget.

Another difficult task is parenting. The single parent faces this alone. How he or she views the situation greatly affects how the children see it. As Lora Tessman puts it, "If the child or adolescent can see that the separation or death has not, in the long run, 'ruined' the remaining parent's life, it is easier for him to see that his own does not have to be 'ruined' either."³²

Yet, this is often not the case. When single parents do not adjust, they predispose their children to the same fate. Despert warns that "the personal maladjustment which leads to failure of a marriage is a legacy from generation to generation to generation. Each marriage without love, each parent who cannot give love to a child, is preparing a new

³¹ Janet A. Kohen, Carol A. Brown, and Roslyn Feldberg, "Divorced Mothers: The Costs and Benefits of Female Family Control," in Divorce and Separation, George Levinger and Oliver C. Moles, eds. (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 242.

³² Lora Heims Tessman, Children of Parting Parents (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), p. 517.

generation for marriage failure and for children of divorce."³³

This cycle can be broken if the parent will work toward solving his or her personal problems. More than wishful thinking, Morton and Bernice Hunt find that many formerly marrieds

do find single parenthood rewarding. Difficult, strenuous, almost too much to bear at times--but on balance, deeply satisfying. A large number say they are closer to their children than they were before the breakup; the family has been through a lot together and, as partners in survival, they now have a special kind of bond.³⁴

Emotional Difficulties of the Divorced

If single parents are to achieve a state of well-being and use the divorce as an opportunity for personal growth, they must learn to cope with their emotions. The crisis of divorce usually triggers some negative and potentially damaging feelings. In this section, four emotions will be examined: grief, anger, loneliness, and guilt.

Grief

Sara Bonkowski and Brenda Wanner-Westly describe divorce as "the death of a relationship."³⁵ Bruce Fisher uses Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's familiar five stages of grief to describe what happens during this process. (See Appendix H.) Divorce is similar to death, but in some ways

³³ Despert, Children of Divorce, p. 156.

³⁴ Morton M. Hunt and Bernice Hunt, The Divorce Experience (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), pp. 178-79.

³⁵ Sara E. Bonkowski and Brenda Wanner-Westly, "The Divorce Group: A New Treatment Modality," Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 60 (Nov. 1979), 555.

it is different. In death, a person is lost; in divorce, there is the "loss of an ideal, loss of self-trust, and loss of trust for another."³⁶

In death, the loved one is gone--forever; in divorce, there will usually be contact with the ex-spouse. Wayne E. Oates describes how this affects the grief process:

When we lose someone by death, we usually repress and deny all negative feelings we have toward the deceased. We tend to idealize him or even deify him. However in the grief process after a divorce, the process works in just the reverse manner; we repress and deny all the positive³⁷ feelings we have and tend to villify and derogate the former mate.

Another difference between death and divorce is the way society views the two experiences. When a spouse dies, family, friends, church, and community are there to offer support. They send cards, flowers, food, and attend the wake or funeral. The loss is recognized and the grief-stricken affirmed, but as Alice Pepler observes,

Divorce is not recognized in the church. Death, illness, and all the "honorable" misfortunes of life are raised at the altar of God. . . . But rarely is a congregational voice raised to heaven for the pain of divorce. No church prayer is lifted for an individual who is going through what medicine³⁸ considers the second greatest stress for any human being.

Anger

The frustrations and hurts of divorce often trigger feelings of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Wayne E. Oates, "A Minister's Views on Children of Divorce," in Explaining Divorce To Children, ed. Earl A. Grollman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 173-74.

³⁸ Alice Stolper Pepler, Single Again--This Time With Children (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), p. 23.

intense anger. This anger usually begins in the conflict of the pre-divorce home and continues to grow even after the divorce is final. This is especially true for those who did not want the divorce. According to Morton Hunt, "Since women are more frequently the reluctant ones (even though in the end they are the plaintiffs in over seventy per cent of the divorce actions), one finds intense unabated anger among women."³⁹

Wallerstein and Kelly discovered that over twenty percent of the divorced parents they studied were still extremely angry. For them, "the divorce had not yet been made final, had brought no comfort, and the humiliating incidents of the marital conflict were as fresh as if they had occurred yesterday."⁴⁰

Why do they hang on to such a destructive emotion? Bruce Fisher suggests that anger is a "tool for punishing the other person."⁴¹ Many people assume that if they let go of their anger, they are letting the other person off the hook. Hart adds that "we actually in some strange way enjoy our resentment. It feeds our self-pity; it makes us feel righteous."⁴²

This kind of anger is destructive. It often leads to depression.⁴³ When children are involved, they are often forced to listen to these

³⁹ Hunt, The World of the Formerly Married, p. 224.

⁴⁰ Wallerstein and Kelly, Surviving The Breakup, p. 156.

⁴¹ Fisher, Rebuilding, p. 82.

⁴² Hart, Children and Divorce, p. 41.

⁴³ Don Baker and Emery Nester, Depression: Finding Hope and Meaning in Life's Darkest Shadow (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1983), pp. 187-88.

angry exchanges or, worse, are used "as a vehicle for expressing anger at the former spouse."⁴⁴

In learning to cope with their anger, divorced persons must learn that their anger, though understandable, is their's by choice. This is the basis for the Biblical command to "get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:31,32). This passage is a solid basis for some practical advice from Fisher regarding anger:

The first stage is to accept the fact that, as human beings, we do have feelings of anger. The second stage of the process is to try to learn to express that anger in as many constructive and positive ways as possible which are not harmful to ourselves or to others. The third stage of the process is to reach the stage of forgiveness⁴⁵ whereby we are able to forgive the person with whom we are angry.

Loneliness

Two-thirds of the divorced women in the study by Wallerstein and Kelly "described themselves as lonely, about half of them painfully so."⁴⁶ Even though the single mother usually has her children with her, Hunt notes, "There is no one to approve of her when she handles them well, console her when she does not, laugh with her at their pranks or smile with her at their discoveries."⁴⁷ Despite an increase in social

⁴⁴ Fisher, op cit., p. 72.

⁴⁵ Fisher, When Your Relationship Ends, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Wallerstein and Kelly, loc. cit.

⁴⁷ Hunt, op. cit., p. 50.

activity, dating, and even sexual activity, these women complained about "the absence of meaningful relationships which had some continuity."⁴⁸

For many, the pain of loneliness drives them to what John Goldmeier calls "a frantic search for relationships that may often turn out to be both superficial and fleeting."⁴⁹ Others react by completely withdrawing. Goldmeier asserts that both reactions "are probably, at best, protective devices that deny the reality of the pain that is felt."⁵⁰

The pain of loneliness can, however, become part of the healing process. In a positive way, single adults can utilize their loneliness to become more introspective and reflective. Bruce Fisher describes this as reaching a state of aloneness:

Aloneness is when you've reached the point of being comfortable by yourself. You may choose to sit at home alone by the fire with a book rather than going out and being with people you really don't want to be with. You develop your inner resources and your own personality to the point that you have interests, activities, thoughts and attitudes that make it comfortable to be with yourself.⁵¹

The importance of this is seen in the lives of those who are drawn into serious relationships and sometimes remarriage immediately following divorce. Having been rejected, they are now drawn to another largely out of a sense of their own incompleteness.

⁴⁸ Wallerstein and Kelly, loc. cit.

⁴⁹ John Goldmeier, "Intervention in the Continuum from Divorce to Family Reconstruction," Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 61 (Jan. 1980), 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Fisher, op. cit., p. 4.

Guilt

Many Christians, including the writer, recall a time when the divorced were treated like modern-day lepers by the church. For the most part, the church is beginning, as John Shelby Spong puts it, "to accept the reality and the pain that separation and divorce bring to God's people, and to help redeem and transform that reality and that pain."⁵²

In emphasizing grace, however, there may be a tendency to ignore the guilt brought on by divorce. The guilt experienced by the divorced is not necessarily a guilty "feeling" that will eventually go away; it may be real guilt stemming from the sinful aspects of the divorce.

The challenge facing the divorced is to assess accurately the sinful aspects of their divorce. They must examine their own sinful actions and attitudes beginning with their motives for entering the marriage. This is difficult because of the natural tendency either to blame the other party completely or to blame oneself completely.

In either case, God is not honored and forgiveness is not experienced. Divorced persons who continue to justify their actions and attitudes cut themselves off from God's grace, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (I Pet. 5:5). By the same token, those who wallow in their guilt fail to experience God's forgiveness by continuing to punish themselves.

The challenge facing the church is both to confront the sin of divorce and to accept the divorced as those, like us, who have fallen short

⁵² John Shelby Spong, "Can the Church Bless Divorce?" The Christian Century, 28 Nov. 1980, p. 1127.

of God's ideal.

Letting Go of One's Ex-spouse

The subject of forgiveness raises the larger question of one's relationship to his or her ex-spouse. Inasmuch as the divorced person has experienced God's forgiveness, the ex-spouse must be granted the same forgiveness.

Having done this, the divorced person still must learn to relate to his or her ex-partner in a healthy way, for as Hunt observes, "Divorce, though it cancels the partnership of man and wife, never severs their relationship entirely. . . . Nor is divorce ever completely final as long as there exist between the ex-spouses practical bonds with emotional meanings."⁵³

The most obvious of these bonds are the children. They provide not only an emotional bond, but because of child support and visitation rights, a practical bond as well. The children are often aware of this and may use it to their own advantage by playing one parent against the other. This is understandable. What is not is the use of children as spies or as a means of expressing anger at the other parent.

As previously noted, Wallerstein and Kelly found that for a significant number of parents, the divorce actually solved nothing. The level of conflict between them was either the same or in some cases higher. They described the children in these families as "adversely affected by

⁵³ Hunt, The World of the Formerly Married, p. 203.

the continued quarreling and psychological disturbance and the lonely, unhappy feelings that exacerbated the long-standing anger of the adults."⁵⁴

At the other extreme are those who are still in love with their ex-spouse. This is more common among those who didn't want the divorce. Again, the children may serve as a useful means of holding onto the ex-spouse.

Fisher notes that in both cases, an unhealthy emotional bond exists: "Whenever a person still talks about the former love-partner a great deal, whether in endearing or angry terms . . . that person has not let go of strong feelings for the ex."⁵⁵

Both parties need to be free. As Earl Joiner says, "Divorcees need to realize that regardless of whether or not remarriage is to be considered in the future, if they want to be truly free, they have to dissolve the emotional bonds with their former mates and become whole persons again."⁵⁶ Some divorced persons cannot let go of their love; others cannot let go of their bitterness and anger. Both need to break their psychological dependence on the other person.

The process toward this emotional freedom is what Fisher calls "disentanglement," the goal of which is to reach "the point where our

⁵⁴ Wallerstein and Kelly, Surviving The Breakup, p. 224.

⁵⁵ Fisher, Rebuilding, p. 90.

⁵⁶ E. Earl Joiner, A Christian Considers Divorce and Remarriage (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), p. 94.

feelings for that other person become quite neutral."⁵⁷ He suggests that the key is for divorced persons to work through the grief process. (See Appendix H.) Having been divorced, he affirms that "until we have . . . we will probably be hanging onto that love-relationship instead of letting go as we should."⁵⁸

As previously stated, "letting go" is more difficult for partners who are also parents. Wherever the parents are in this process, their primary concern in matters relating to custody and visitation should be the welfare of the children. Since this project is concerned with single, divorced mothers, and since they are granted custody in the majority of cases, the writer will speak of the mother as the custodial parent and the father as the visiting parent through the remainder of this chapter.

Both parents must realize that their divorce decree does not end their existence as a family; it merely redefines it. Unfortunately, the legal system is adversarial in nature, placing two people who have admitted they cannot get along in the position of being enemies. Even with the advent of no-fault divorce, court proceedings usually help "perpetuate a climate of animosity."⁵⁹ The children are often the real losers.

What are the responsibilities of the father regarding visitation? Joan Kelly suggests that visits be consistent, frequent, and predictable.

⁵⁷ Fisher, When Your Relationship Ends, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Fisher, Rebuilding, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Calvin, Children of Separation and Divorce, p. 120.

In contrast, visits that are brief and infrequent are "a bitter disappointment to almost all the youngsters creating open sadness in younger children and considerable anger in youngsters nine years and older."⁶⁰

Richard Gardner describes another common scenario. When father visits, the children have fun and play games. He may seek to ease his guilt by failing to discipline them. Life with mother, on the other hand, means getting up for school, doing homework, and helping around the house. "Fathers who behave in this fashion are doing their children a disservice. The best atmosphere a visiting parent can provide the children is one that most closely resembles the original home."⁶¹

The mother also has responsibilities regarding visitation. Her greatest contribution, according to Kelly, is "her full recognition and acceptance of the child's need for the relationship, and her cooperation in allowing the relationship to flourish."⁶² Robert L. Sadoff and Stephen Billick add that such visitation "should be guaranteed unless it is clearly proved that the relationship is dangerous, physically or emotionally."⁶³

⁶⁰ Joan B. Kelly, "The Visiting Relationship After Divorce: Research Findings and Clinical Implications," in Children of Separation and Divorce, Irving R. Stuart and Lawrence Edwin Abt, eds. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981), pp. 348-49.

⁶¹ Richard A. Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce 1977; rpt. (New York: Doubleday, Bantam Books, 1980), p. 292.

⁶² Kelly, op. cit., p. 355.

⁶³ Robert L. Sadoff and Stephen Billick, "The Legal Rights and Difficulties of Children in Separation and Divorce," in Children of Separation and Divorce, Irving R. Stuart and Lawrence Edwin Abt, eds. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981), p. 13.

Another difficulty in "letting go" is the necessity of alimony and child support. Hunt says, "Alimony, though it may be necessary, keeps the woman both practically and emotionally bound to her ex-husband."⁶⁴ Nan Zoeller adds that it causes women to feel "cheapened and 'kept'". . . . The shock is to discover that single doesn't mean independent."⁶⁵

Money has both a practical and a symbolic value in our culture.⁶⁶ Because of this, it is often used as a weapon. As Francke explains, "Many divorced fathers withhold it to punish their ex-wives, pay erratically or don't pay at all. . . . The abuses of money following divorce are legion, and inevitably, it is the mother and the children who come out on the short end of the financial stick."⁶⁷

Dating and Sex

For most divorced persons, the decision to start dating can be a frightening one. So much has changed. As Morawetz and Walker point out,

In couples where the marriage took place when both parents were young and frequently "high school sweethearts," or where the partner was the first and only man/woman each ever knew, the idea of having to "learn" the complex "dating game" and put oneself back "in the market" is often distasteful and intimidating.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Hunt, The World of the Formerly Married, p. 211.

⁶⁵ Nan Zoeller, "Once Married, Now Single," The Christian Home, June-Aug. 1981, p. 23.

⁶⁶ Despert, Children of Divorce, p. 66.

⁶⁷ Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 124.

⁶⁸ Morawetz and Walker, Brief Therapy With Single-Parent Families, p. 236.

Dating can be helpful to the divorced person even during the painful grief process. Dating, as Hunt points out, "has so few built-in demands, and can be used to try out emotional relationships on a very shallow level, without any requirement to love or even to care."⁶⁹

Here is where the trouble often begins. Fisher explains what often happens to those who are single again:

Because we are not whole and complete people, but have emotional deficiencies, we try to fill those emotional deficiencies by "loving" another person. What we lack in ourselves we hope to find in the other person. . . . Unfortunately, many of us are still struggling to fulfill ourselves. If my own life bucket is empty when I say, "I love you," to another person, it probably means, "Please love me."⁷⁰

Too many of these hurting people seem to forget the true nature of courtship. As Richard Stuart and Barbara Johnson point out, "Courtship is the time of maximum human deception. Never during the course of human development do we overstate our virtues or conceal our vices as skillfully as we do when we try to convince someone to share our lives."⁷¹

Dating, then, can be a positive experience in divorce recovery. However, newly divorced singles need to heed Fisher's warning that what is most helpful at this time of life is friendship, not another love-relationship.⁷²

This raises the question of sex. All singles must face the ethical

⁶⁹ Hunt, op. cit., p. 137.

⁷⁰ Fisher, Rebuilding, p. 130.

⁷¹ Richard B. Stuart and Barbara Jacobson, Second Marriage (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), p. 57.

⁷² Fisher, op. cit., p. 33.

issues of sexuality. The divorced, once accustomed to having their sexual needs met, are suddenly without a partner. How, then, should singles, particularly Christian singles, view these issues?

Lewis R. Rambo offers these insights into the problem of sex for the Christian single:

The basic conflict we have to deal with is that between a view of sex as in and of itself an evil, perverse thing . . . and one that recognizes our normal, God-given, human desires for closeness, touching, tenderness, affirmation, love. . . . We human beings are seeking to fulfill something deeper, our urge for a mutual relationship with another in which each nurtures, cares for and sustains the other.⁷³

Later he says, "We want the intimacy now denied to us; we need tremendously the sexual affirmation which could cure our desperate sense of rejection."⁷⁴ He concludes:

I'd say it is better to have sex outside of marriage than to get married or remarried in order to have sex. I don't feel comfortable being an advocate for such a position, which is one clearly involving theological problems for most churches. But in view of the practical consequences, I think it's the wiser course.⁷⁵

Every Christian--single, divorced, married, or widowed--must ask where he or she will begin in forming convictions regarding sexual morality. The writer is not attempting to offer a detailed treatise on Biblical ethics, nor does he wish to appear insensitive to the needs expressed by Rambo and other Christians. However, as Dwight Small points out, "If one adopts the Christian position--sex ethics determined by the

⁷³ Rambo, The Divorcing Christian, p. 69.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

authority of God's revealed purposes and laws--then such behavior as non-marital sex, whether premarital, mate-swapping, group sex behavior, or simple adultery is wrong."⁷⁶

Rambo is correct in affirming our God-given needs for closeness, touching, and tenderness. But these needs can be met in non-sexual ways. We are not limited to two alternatives: sex outside marriage or marriage solely for sex. Such a conclusion is reductionistic and assumes that because we are sexual beings, we cannot survive without having sexual relations.

This is not to suggest that Christians attempt to deny their sexuality. As Earl Wilson states, "The main problem with repression is that it doesn't work."⁷⁷ John Stott points out the difference between sexuality and sexual experience:

Sexual experience is not essential to human fulfillment. To be sure, it is a good gift from God. But it is not given to all, and it is not indispensable to humanness. . . .

So, ultimately, it is a crisis of faith: Whom shall we believe? God or the world? Shall we submit to the lordship of Jesus, or succumb to the pressures of prevailing culture? . . .

Faith accepts God's grace. If God calls us to⁷⁸ celibacy abstinence is not only good, it is also possible.

Remarriage and the Blended Family

Most divorced women (three out of four) will remarry. Francke

⁷⁶ Dwight Hervey Small, Christian: Celebrate Your Sexuality (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1974), p. 24.

⁷⁷ Earl D. Wilson, Sexual Sanity (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984). p. 112.

⁷⁸ John R.W. Stott, "Homosexual Marriage," Christianity Today 22 Nov. 1985, p. 27.

suggests many of them do so too soon since "more second marriages end in divorce (44 percent) than do first marriages (38 percent)."⁷⁹ Betty Rollin claims that such statistics "are distorted by the chronic divorce-ers."⁸⁰ She goes on to cite several studies indicating that second marriages are usually happier and last longer than first marriages.⁸¹

The writer's experience confirms the findings of both. Far too many second marriages end in divorce. But second marriages can work and when they do, they seem to work very well. A prerequisite to this is bringing closure to the first marriage. As Francke says, "If the divorces that preceded the new union have been successfully completed emotionally, the adults can bring enthusiasm and maturity born of experience into the new alliance."⁸²

Even when a divorced person has worked through the process of restructuring his or her life, the real work is just beginning. This, according to Rollin, is the most distinguishing characteristic of successful second marriages: "sweat."⁸³ To their credit, many remarried couples seem especially determined to make their marriages work and to avoid the mistakes of the past.

⁷⁹ Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 30.

⁸⁰ Betty Rollin, "The American Way of Marriage: Remarriage," in Love Marriage Family: A Developmental Approach, Marcia E. Lasswell and Thomas E. Lasswell, eds. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 490.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Francke, op. cit., p. 218.

⁸³ Rollin, op. cit., p. 493.

Rollin also points out that successful remarrieds are better equipped for marriage: "They know themselves better, both personally and professionally. The older they are, the more likely it is that they have found themselves, and the less they will look to the other person for support and definition."⁸⁴ Fisher describes them in these terms:

Standing upright, not leaning on or tangled up with the other person, they are able to live their own lives. They can come close together and choose the smothering position temporarily; they can walk hand-in-hand as they might do in parenting their children; they can move apart and have their own careers, their own lives, and their own friends. Their choice to stay together is out of love for each other rather ⁸⁵than needing to stay together because of some unmet emotional needs.

Paradoxically, those who are best prepared for remarriage are those who are the most comfortable with their singleness, who least need to be married. They are "free to choose singleness or remarriage."⁸⁶

In considering remarriage, one of the key factors is the children. According to Francke, one out of every six children now lives with a stepfamily. She goes on to say, "Trying to get away from the negative stereotyping of the prefix 'step,' which in Old English meant 'bereaved orphan,' such families are now called 'blended' or 'reconstituted' families. But simply updating the words does not make the situation easier."⁸⁷

What are some of the problems of being a stepparent? Many like to

⁸⁴ Rollin, loc. cit.

⁸⁵ Fisher, Rebuilding, p. 146.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 185.

⁸⁷ Francke, op. cit., p. 184.

think of themselves as their stepchild's "new parent." However, Rollin points out that "the new parent is, after all, not a replacement of a parent, but an additional parent, and, apparently that's how most kids come to feel about it."⁸⁸ Francke adds that while young boys are likely to welcome a stepfather, older boys often do not and girls are even more reluctant to accept a stepmother.⁸⁹

Gardner advises stepparents to be realistic: "Parents who believe that they should be just as loving toward their stepchildren as they are toward their own children are placing an unnecessary burden upon themselves."⁹⁰ However, Rollin points out that "like the new marital partner, the child of that partner needs to be wooed too. If the wooing is genuine, and if the wooer is patient, the child is usually won."⁹¹

Another even greater problem is created when two sets of children are blended into one family unit. What may be an ideal arrangement for the parents is often viewed differently by the children. As Francke points out, "Stepfamilies are launched at full speed with no breaking-in time and with no sense of shared history."⁹² The resulting rivalry is more intense among younger children who often "compete for attention, for little extras to prove to their stepcounterpart that their parent

⁸⁸ Rollin, Love Marriage Family, p. 494.

⁸⁹ Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 187

⁹⁰ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 361.

⁹¹ Rollin, loc. cit.

⁹² Francke, op. cit., p. 202.

loves them more."⁹³

Whether stepsiblings are involved or not, the remarriage of a parent "often presents children with loyalty dilemmas they are too unsophisticated to solve. If they find themselves liking the stepparent, is that disloyal to their natural parent?"⁹⁴

A child may even "experience remarriage as a 'second divorce,' particularly if there has been an intense bonding during the 'single parent' stage. . . . His role is now usurped by the new spouse . . . his ordinal position as oldest or youngest or as only boy or girl may be changed."⁹⁵

Another problem faced by stepparents is discipline. Gardner advises stepparents to be firm with their stepchildren despite protests that he or she is not their "real mother" or "real father."⁹⁶ This is much easier said than done. A certain amount of conflict is inevitable and may be part of the price one pays in remarrying.

Finally, the Christian needs to consider the Scriptural implications of remarriage. The writer has already set forth his own case in chapter one. However, in counseling those considering remarriage, it is obvious that many Christians have not given this much serious consideration.

⁹³ Francke, op. cit., p. 203.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 192.

⁹⁵ Helen Crohn et al., "Understanding and Treating the Child in the Remarried Family," in Children of Separation and Divorce, Irving R. Stuart and Lawrence Edwin Abt, eds. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981), p. 295.

⁹⁶ Gardner, op. cit., p. 366.

Some are possessed by a strong need to maintain their own innocence while shifting most if not all the blame on their ex-spouse. They see little or no need for self-examination and repentance. Others take the opposite route by assuming all or most of the blame. They sometimes carry the burden of their guilt for years seeing every problem or setback as a sure sign that God is punishing them for divorcing and remarrying.

Both types have the same problem. Neither has allowed the grace of God to touch their brokenness. In counseling them, the writer often asks, "In what ways have you dealt with the sinful aspects of your marriage and divorce? Have you experienced God's grace and forgiveness through repentance and confession?" This grace, when genuinely experienced, cleanses the past and invites God's blessings on the future.

General Effects of Divorce on Children

In considering the effects of divorce on children, Jetse Sprey says, "The diversity of relevant factors is so large, their possible combinations so numerous, the the query: what is the impact of divorce on children? becomes analogous to: what is the color of birds?"⁹⁷ There are no "typical" children of divorce.

However, those interested in helping the divorced and their children need to understand these relevant factors. They are diverse, numerous, and their possible combinations endless. They are also vital to our understanding of the crisis of divorce as they experience it.

⁹⁷ Jetse Sprey, "Children in Divorce: An Overview," in Explaining Divorce to Children, ed. Earl A. Grollman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 52.

Gary W. Peterson and Helen K. Clemenshaw define crisis as "a form of disorganization resulting in either 'negative disruption' or 'creative regenesis.'"⁹⁸ The concept of divorce as crisis is helpful in that it avoids the extremes of either ignoring divorce's impact on children or assuming they are the hopeless "products of a broken home."

Divorce is a crisis, but it is more. The word "crisis" suggests brevity and implies that divorce is an event. It is more accurate to speak of it as a process that begins with the breakdown of the marriage and continues long after.

The Children of Divorce project is one of the most significant studies of divorced families ever conducted. The project began in 1971 with sixty divorced couples and 131 children ranging from three to eighteen years of age.

Project founder, psychologist Judith Wallerstein, discovered that time alone does not heal the damaging effects of divorce. In 1982, Lloyd Billingsly reported on Wallerstein's findings ten years after the study began. Thirty-seven percent of the children were described as "intensely unhappy and dissatisfied with their life in the post-divorce family." Twenty-nine percent "represented a middle ground of psychological health." Thirty-four percent "were found to be psychologically resilient and coping well with their changed life."⁹⁹ This suggests that divorce is both

⁹⁸ Gary W. Peterson and Helen K. Clemenshaw, "Families During the Divorce Crisis: An Integrative Review with Clinical Implications," in Family Strengths, Nice Stinnett et al., eds. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1980), p. 432.

⁹⁹ Lloyd Billingsley, "Bad News About The Effects of Divorce," Christianity Today, 12 Nov. 1982, p. 84.

a crisis and a process. It also suggests that recovery is possible but by no means inevitable.

Effects of Parental Conflict on Children

For parents, the decision to divorce is complicated by the presence of their children. Most wonder if they should stay together "for the sake of the kids." Such parents are already beginning the divorce process, what Despert calls "emotional divorce." She adds that "not all emotional divorce . . . ends in the open and sometimes cleansing surgery of divorce by law."¹⁰⁰

Is this really in the best interest of the children? Child psychologist Richard Gardner says it is not: "When one compares the incidence of psychiatric disturbance between children from broken homes and those from intact but unhappy homes, there appears to be a higher incidence of psychopathology in children in the latter group."¹⁰¹

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox agree that "in the long run, it is not a good idea for parents to remain in a conflicted marriage for the sake of the children if the alternative is a stable nonconflicted one-parent household."¹⁰² They go on to say that couples who wonder if they should stay together for the sake of the children seem to "assume that marital

¹⁰⁰ Despert, Children of Divorce, p. 256.

¹⁰¹ Richard A. Gardner, Psychotherapy With Children of Divorce (New York: Jason Aronson, 1976), p. 40.

¹⁰² E. Mavis Hetherington, Martha Cox, and Roger Cox, "Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children," in Nontraditional Families: Parenting and Child Development, ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982), p. 262.

conflict ceases at the time of divorce."¹⁰³

This is a false assumption, for as Wallerstein and Kelly discovered, most divorced parents continue to fight as bitterly, if not more bitterly, than they had during the marriage. Such conflict is "a central cause of poor outcome for the children and the adolescents."¹⁰⁴ Thirty percent of the children they studied "were aware of intense bitterness between their parents five years after the divorce. For these families, the divorce had failed, as had the marriage."¹⁰⁵

This is not to suggest that parents should never say anything negative or critical about one another to their children. As Gardner says, "All of us, whether or not our parents are divorced, should have as accurate a picture as possible of our parents, both their assets and their liabilities."¹⁰⁶

A contributing factor to this post-divorce conflict is the need felt by many to justify their decision to divorce or to continue blaming the other partner. This seems especially true in Christian circles where many try to determine "guilty" and "innocent" parties. In such cases, the children are often caught in the middle.

Finally, there is the adversarial nature of the legal system.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Wallerstein and Kelly, Surviving The Breakup, p. 224.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 321.

Calvin points out that such a system only

helps to perpetuate a climate of animosity between two parents who already have proved they cannot get along as husband and wife. .

. To the extent that the system casts divorcing parents in the roles of enemies . . a self-fulfilling prophecy is created.¹⁰⁷

The overall challenge facing divorced parents, then, is "to isolate their marital conflicts from their roles as parents."¹⁰⁸

What Divorced Parents Should Tell Their Children

The above statement assumes that parents will talk to their children about the divorce. This does not always happen. For some parents, discussing the divorce with their children is too difficult. Jack C. Westman and David W. Cline suggest that this inability may reveal "their own irrational and poorly understood motivations in the divorce action."¹⁰⁹ Such discussions may be unpleasant, but the children's need for information is paramount.

The writer has already noted the need by many parents to justify their decision to divorce. This need often becomes the hidden agenda in discussions with the children. When it does, parents tend to give children what Blaine R. Porter and Randy S. Chatelain describe as "a biased, bitter or distorted account of what brought about the divorce and what is

¹⁰⁷ Calvin, Children of Separation and Divorce, p. 120.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Jack C. Westman and David W. Cline, "Divorce Is a Family Affair," in Love Marriage Family: A Developmental Approach, Marcia E. Lasswell and Thomas E. Lasswell, eds. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1973), p. 468.

still happening between their parents."¹¹⁰

Some parents go to the other extreme and gloss over the matter. In both cases, the parents are guilty of exaggerating or even lying. A better way is the way of honesty. Considering, of course, the ages of the children, there should never be any dishonesty in talking to them about the divorce. Parents may not need to tell all, but they do need to be sure that what they do say is neither false nor misleading.

What do children want to know? Divorced mother Alice Peppler says there are three questions in the minds of most children: "1. How did this happen? What are the reasons? 2. Do you still love me? Does my father (mother) still love me? 3. How will my life be changed?"¹¹¹

The first question is probably the most puzzling for children, especially young ones. It is probably the most painful question for the parents, for it calls forth feelings they may wish to ignore. But denial about the real causes of divorce only undermines the parent's credibility when it may already be at an all-time low.

Lora Tessman offers the example of a family in which disputes about the child contributed to the marital breakdown. To deny this before the child "would offend his reality sense and undermine his capacity to trust his own perception or judgement."¹¹²

Parents need to inform, not defend. Peppler recommends that parents

¹¹⁰ Blaine R. Porter and Randy S. Chatelain, "Family Life Education for Single Parent Families," Family Relations, 30 (Oct. 1981), 521.

¹¹¹ Peppler, Single Again, p. 43.

¹¹² Tessman, Children of Parting Parents, p. 502.

be specific: "'It just didn't work out' has no credibility to a child who feels it is the adult's responsibility to make it work. 'We stopped loving each other a long time ago' may be the truth, but it makes the child question the parent's continued love for him."¹¹³

This is the second question: "Do you still love?" Later in this chapter, the writer will elaborate on the child's need to blame himself for the divorce. Simply put, children of divorce oftentimes feel unloveable. Parents should take these feelings seriously and do all they can to demonstrate their love.

What should children be told when the absent parent has little or no love for the child? Gardner addresses the issue of actual abandonment. In such cases, the custodial parent sometimes feels the need "to protect the children from what he or she considers to be the harmful effects of revealing to the children the truth about the abandoning parent."¹¹⁴ Such parents make excuses like, "He really loves you, but he doesn't know how to show it." Gardner warns that such explanations only confuse children and cause them to form a distorted idea of love, namely that one can love someone and rarely, if ever, show it. ¹¹⁵

In cases like this, the truth is painful. The words of Jesus are assuring: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32) The way of honesty is ultimately the least painful.

¹¹³ Peppler, op. cit., p. 44.

¹¹⁴ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 136.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Hart contrasts reality-based fears with fears based on imagination: "A child can cope much better with fears that are based on reality than with fears caused by imagination [because] fears based on imagination know no limits."¹¹⁶

The third question in the minds of children is, "How will my life be changed?" Again, without specific answers, parents turn their children's imagination loose and cause them much unnecessary anxiety. This is especially true for small children (ages two to nine years) who need "detailed, mundane answers about routines or activities previously shared with each parent, visiting arrangements, etc."¹¹⁷

So far, the emphasis in this section has been on what parents should say. Parents do well to spend time listening to their children as well. Children need the freedom to ask questions and to know they will be taken seriously. They need to be able to express their fears and anger. The benefits of this kind of communication extend far beyond the immediate needs of the divorce crisis. They can become the foundation of a renewed and mutually satisfying parent/child relationship.

Children's Age and the Impact of Divorce

One of the factors that determines the impact of divorce on children is their age at the time of the divorce. Though not a major factor, the following material shows how children at different age levels perceive what is happening.

¹¹⁶ Hart, Children and Divorce, p. 80.

¹¹⁷ Tessman, Children of Parting Parents, p. 501.

0 to 2 Years (Infants and Toddlers)

Even babies feel the impact of divorce. Linda Francke points out that "what they feel is not their own distress, but that of their custodial parent."¹¹⁸ The impact, though indirect, is very real in that the parent experiences a diminished capacity to parent.

At about one year, the impact becomes more direct; the child has lost a parent. Even the custodial parent (usually the mother) may be lost to a job outside the home. From this time till around eighteen months, the child is in a phase psychologists call attachment bonding. The child has an extremely close attachment to his parents and already fears losing them. According to Francke, "If the noncustodial parent drops out of a young child's life completely, the child will almost always look for him (or her) during adolescence."¹¹⁹

3 to 5 Years (Preschoolers)

Preschoolers begin to develop a defense mechanism called denial. This is a mixed blessing, for while it does "serve as a temporary buffer against pain prolonged denial can prevent the child from integrating the divorce and getting on with his own development."¹²⁰

Children at this age are also able to experience guilt. They know all about "good" and "bad." This is a time of egocentric reasoning, that is, they think everything centers around them. "Thus," says

¹¹⁸ Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 58.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

Longfellow, "they conceptualize the divorce as if it has happened between them and their parents, or as a result of their own wrong-doing."¹²¹ The divorce may have had little or nothing to do with the child, but at this age, parents can do little to convince him it did not.

Another problem common to preschoolers is regression. Regression means the child returns to such behavior as thumb-sucking, eating with his fingers, or dependence on a blanket. Sometimes this reaction lasts for weeks; sometimes it goes on for a year or more. Francke calls this "the most universal reaction of preschoolers to divorce."¹²²

6 to 8 Years (Younger Children)

Hart calls this "the most critical age for children to experience divorce."¹²³ Bonnie Robson observes that they often react to the stress "through disruptive behavior, being hard to control and disobedient anxious, aggressive, and moody and frequently have temper tantrums."¹²⁴ She goes on to explain why: "The children have an intense sense of the family as a unit. They experience separation as an immediate loss of the family, even if family life has been unpleasant and full of tension."¹²⁵

As painful as life may have been in the pre-divorce family, most

¹²¹ Longfellow, Divorce and Separation, p. 300.

¹²² Francke, op. cit., p. 79.

¹²³ Hart, Children and Divorce, p. 28.

¹²⁴ Bonnie Robson, "Developmental Approach to Teaching Children," in Therapy With Remarriage Families, ed. James C. Hansen (Rockville, MD: Aspen Systems, 1982), p. 68.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

children prefer it to the pain of being deprived of a parent. These feelings are called reconciliation fantasies. These fantasies are hard on both parents and children, for as Gardner notes, "The children's pleas that the parents not separate can be one of the most guilt-provoking experiences a divorcing parent may have to suffer."¹²⁶

This guilt is minor compared to the pain felt by the children. For them, it is a death--the death of the family. They feel "sad, a persistent and sometimes crippling sadness that even a year after the divorce they have only been able to mute to resignation."¹²⁷ For younger children, divorce is a time of grief.

These children also feel a sense of betrayal and deprivation, and this makes them angry. While they can be very open about their sadness, children this age can do little about their anger. Longfellow says, "Children at the 'subjective level' of social reasoning do not understand that they (or anyone else) can simultaneously hold two opposing feelings (love and anger) towards the same person."¹²⁸ Besides, children are not accustomed to expressing anger at their parents without suffering the consequences. The child who has just lost a parent is doubly afraid to express any anger lest he or she also be forced to leave.

9 to 12 Years (Older Children)

While children in this age group rarely feel responsible for their

¹²⁶ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 173.

¹²⁷ Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 90.

¹²⁸ Longfellow, op. cit., p. 302.

parents' divorce, they still feel "rejected and abandoned by the departing parent."¹²⁹ (emphasis mine.) Unlike younger children, they are better able to express their anger, though, as Longfellow notes, they are "still torn by their feelings of anger and loyalty toward their parents."¹³⁰

Part of the reason these children no longer blame themselves is that they are becoming more realistic about life. They are beginning to develop the ability to sympathize and understand others. Yet, they also have what Francke calls "a very strict sense of fairness, of what is right and what is wrong."¹³¹ For them, divorce is outrageous. These children are not just angry; they are furious and may ask, "How could you do this to me?" Perhaps it is this disillusionment that often impairs their spiritual development at this age.¹³²

For older children, divorce is also a time of loneliness. Parents often become so caught up in their own struggles that they pay little attention to their children. Teenagers often like to be alone; younger children usually are not left alone for long periods of time. But these children, though old enough to take care of themselves, are not old enough to enjoy it. The result is loneliness.¹³³

¹²⁹ Longfellow, Divorce and Separation, p. 302.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 303.

¹³¹ Francke, op. cit., p. 113.

¹³² Hart, Children and Divorce, p. 30.

¹³³ Francke, op. cit., p. 130.

13 to 19 Years (Teenagers)

Adolescence is characterized by insecurity and divorce only makes matters worse. This time of life requires a firm and steady hand on the part of parents, but with the divorce, the familiar code of family discipline vanishes often leaving teens with few guidelines.¹³⁴

Another common problem among teenagers is hypermaturity. Instead of moving steadily and slowly through the process of maturing, teens dealing with their parents' divorce may find part of themselves rushing to become overly mature while another part remains stuck in childhood. For example, girls may wish to socialize with much older boys and may become sexually active.¹³⁵

Divorce and Childrens' Emotions

In the previous section, the writer showed how children at different age levels experience divorce. In this section, special attention will be given to three emotions often present in the lives of children: guilt, anger, and fear.

Guilt

Many children, especially preschoolers and young children, feel guilty over their parents' divorce. Children are introduced to the concepts of guilt and blame early in life. Therefore, when the divorce occurs, children tend "to think along the lines of who is at fault."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 153.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

¹³⁶ Gardner, Psychotherapy With Children of Divorce, p. 143.

Their natural self-centeredness causes them to think of the divorce as being between them and their parents.

Another reason why children blame themselves is that they are bad; at least this is what many of them are told--and believe. Their parents may be overly strict and harsh in their dealings with them. Children may be keen observers of life, but they are poor interpreters of it. Therefore, they may see a connection between the departure of a parent and some minor infraction such as forgetting to clean their room.

Children, like everyone else, need to feel secure. Having perfect parents helps, and this need for security partly explains why children idealize their parents. By blaming themselves, children can still "view their parents as perfect. And if parents have the need to present themselves as such (by never admitting defects, for example), then such tendencies on the children's part may be enhanced."¹³⁷

Another cause of guilt is the resentment of the custodial parent toward the children. Gardner suggests that a single mother may resent her children because they limit her social life, lessen her chances for remarriage, and force her to communicate with their father.¹³⁸ Such resentment is easily sensed by the children.

Children are often at the center of disputes in the pre-divorce home. If a child constantly hears his parents complain about how much everything costs or suspects he was not "planned," he may deduce that

¹³⁷ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 171.

¹³⁸ Gardner, Psychotherapy With Children of Divorce, p. 181.

his presence contributed to the breakup.¹³⁹

Children also experience guilt when they feel they've been disloyal to one or both parents. Divorce often places them in situations "where loyalty is openly tested, where they are required to make decisions and take actions that reveal without question their preferences."¹⁴⁰

There are many possible causes of guilt in children of divorce. Parents may find it frustrating to deal with. Regardless of what they are told, children often are convinced that they are--at least in part--to blame for the divorce. And too often they are.

Anger

For most children, adjusting to life in the post-divorce family means dealing with anger. Children are sometimes abandoned by the absent parent and the custodial parent may resent them. These parental attitudes, whether real or imagined, can cause the child to feel angry.

Despite the growing number of divorces and single-parent families, some children still feel the stigma of coming from a "broken home." They sometimes feel embarrassment or shame over their circumstances. This, too, can lead to feelings of anger.

Divorce does not "break" families as much as it rearranges them. It usually results in a change in life style. Mother may have to take a job or work longer hours. Still, a lower standard of living is a common reality in single-parent families. The child often resents this change

¹³⁹ Gardner, Psychotherapy, p. 146.

¹⁴⁰ Gardner, Parents, p. 166.

but can do nothing about it. Again, the result is anger.

Many children consider the divorce itself to be an act of selfishness. Sometimes it is. Other children are angry over custody and visitation arrangements. As Joan Kelly puts it, the post-divorce family arrangements often "reflect adult priorities and needs at the expense of the children's needs."¹⁴¹ These children are like pawns in a game over which they have no control.

Many divorced parents are unaware of their child's anger and may even deny it exists. Children, especially young ones, are usually unable to express their anger. According to Francke, they "are very reluctant to air negative feelings about their parents for fear of punishment or reprisal."¹⁴² This is especially true if they are also blaming themselves for the divorce.

Parents may not like to admit it, but children learn to repress their anger at home. Gardner speaks of children who "may have grown up in a home where they were taught expressions of anger toward a parent is a terrible thing to do."¹⁴³ This is even more common in Christian homes.

At the other extreme are homes where everyone expresses his anger but in destructive ways. There, "the devastating effects of expression of anger on each of the parents has inhibited the children from expressing their hostility."¹⁴⁴ Such children may fear that any expression of

¹⁴¹ Kelly, Children of Separation and Divorce, p. 357.

¹⁴² Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 57.

¹⁴³ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 232.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 232-33.

anger on their part will drive one or both parents farther away.

If children rarely express their anger directly, then what do they do with it? Usually they deny it. Such children are seldom consciously aware of their anger.¹⁴⁵ When it does surface, it may become self-directed. These children are excessively critical of themselves and eventually become depressed. Other children simply become more aggressive or belligerent.

Anger is a God-given emotion. It motivates us either to alter our situation or get out of it. However, as Hart points out, "No amount of anger on the child's part is going to change anything. The anger therefore becomes self-defeating."¹⁴⁶

What can parents do? They should first examine their own attitudes toward anger. It can be dealt with in a constructive manner. Parents also should examine their feelings about their child's anger. Children need to be able to express their feelings in acceptable ways. Hart suggests that "a parent who can receive the child's anger without defending or excusing himself or herself will be helping the healing process."¹⁴⁷

Fear

Childhood can be a frightening experience even at its best. The world is large and complex to children who are well aware of their

¹⁴⁵ Gardner, Psychotherapy With Children of Divorce, p. 182.

¹⁴⁶ Hart, Children and Divorce, p. 70.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 71.

own vulnerability."¹⁴⁸

Children's most basic fear is that they will be abandoned. In some cases, they have been; the departing parent has little or no meaningful contact with them and they worry that the custodial parent may do the same. Sometimes they perceive the departing parent as being forced to leave because he was "bad." Maybe the same will happen to them.¹⁴⁹

Whether these fears are realistic or not, they are all based on their normal concern over who will provide for them. Over three-fourths of the children in Wallerstein's study were "consciously preoccupied with the concern that needs--not only present but future--would go unattended."¹⁵⁰ Fortunately, these fears usually diminish with time. As children adjust in the post-divorce family, the fear of abandonment usually subsides.¹⁵¹

What can parents do to help? They can be sensitive to their child's fears and not make light of them. Parents must also realize that children may not express their fears openly. They may become more cautious or overly affectionate. Most of all, parents need to realize that these fears will likely pass if and when the child sees that life in the post-divorce family is pleasant and rewarding.

¹⁴⁸ Wallerstein and Kelly, Surviving The Breakup, p. 45.

¹⁴⁹ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 129.

¹⁵⁰ Wallerstein and Kelly, loc. cit.

¹⁵¹ Gardner, op. cit., p. 133.

Discipline in the Single-Parent Family

Disciplining children is one of the most difficult aspects of parenting. It presses parents' wisdom and courage to the limit. This is especially true for single parents. As Francke explains, "Preoccupied single parents often show less affection toward their children than do married parents and tend to be inconsistent in maintaining discipline as well."¹⁵²

Single parents (like many married parents) tend to go from one extreme to the other, being too strict one minute and too lenient the next. According to Peterson and Clemenshaw,

Parents experiencing divorce often become increasingly punitive, less rational in their control attempts, and less supportive with their children. . . . Parental behaviors of this nature tend to elicit disobedient and acting out responses in children which, in turn, evoke further responsiveness from parents.¹⁵³

This is the "reciprocal aggravation cycle."¹⁵⁴ Hetherington, Cox, and Cox call it the "vicious circle of coercion" and add that the lack of management skills of the mothers accelerates the child's aversive behavior for which she is the main instigator and target. This is reciprocated by increased coercion in the mother's parenting behavior."¹⁵⁵ The result is an immature, undisciplined child.

At the other extreme are the single parents described by Wallerstein

¹⁵² Francke, Growing Up Divorced, p. 39.

¹⁵³ Peterson and Clemenshaw, Family Strengths, p. 434.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 435.

¹⁵⁵ Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, Nontraditional Families, p. 257.

and Kelly as being "unable to say no to demanding children or enforce unwelcome rules for fear the children would reject them in favor of the other parent."¹⁵⁶ Being too lenient, like being too strict, is understandable. Chances are that amid the pre-divorce conflict, discipline in the home had already begun to erode. Add to this the parent's guilt and their lowered self-esteem and one can easily see how discipline becomes almost non-existent.

The problem of leniency is inherent in single-parent families.

Robert Weiss describes what often occurs:

The very commitment of single-parent mothers to be good mothers, to see to it that their children are adequately loved and nurtured and cared for, sets the stage. If children find a reasonable objection to a mother's request, the mother may feel obligated to consider it. If the children want to change a household routine, postpone a chore, escape, just this one time, a rule of the household, the mother may try to accommodate them as far as she can. If the children are clinging or provocative or insistent on being attended to, the mother may do her utmost to indulge them. But the negotiations, accommodations, and indulgences take their toll on the mother's nerves.¹⁵⁷

According to Morawetz and Walker, many parents are guilty of "taking both extremes--at times being very lenient and at other times being overly strict, even to the point of violence."¹⁵⁸ Effective discipline avoids the extremes of harshness and leniency. It is loving, but consistent and firm.

¹⁵⁶ Wallerstein and Kelly, Surviving The Breakup, p. 112.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Weiss, Marital Separation (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 180-81.

¹⁵⁸ Morawetz and Walker, Brief Therapy With Single-Parent Families p. 16.

Self-esteem In Children of Divorce

According to Porter and Chatelain, "One of the major challenges for divorced single parents is to help their children maintain their self-esteem. Loss of self-esteem is usually one of the first things suffered by children of divorcing parents."¹⁵⁹ In addition to the usual difficulties in meeting this challenge, single parents have additional obstacles to overcome.

Richard Gardner notes that children deprived of parental affection suffer from low self-esteem which "is the central problem being dealt with in most psychogenic disturbances."¹⁶⁰ Such deprivation can occur in any home. It is more evident in single-parent homes, for as Gardner goes on to say, "The child is still likely to consider himself to have been abandoned. He generally goes further and assumes that he has been rejected because he is unlovable."¹⁶¹

Life in the post-divorce family is likely to mean a lowered standard of living. In such homes, children often sense their parents' frustration over financial hardships. They may feel they are a burden to their parents. Gardner points out that in such situations, a child "may interpret an absent father's failure to pay his alimony to be a reflection of his own worthlessness."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Porter and Chatelain, Family Relations, pp. 521-22.

¹⁶⁰ Gardner, Psychotherapy With Children of Divorce, p. 269.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 271.

The children of divorce suffer other indignities as well. The adversarial nature of our legal system reduces children to pawns. According to Archibald Hart,

When children are treated like pieces of property to be bartered, when their feelings and wishes are ignored, when they are used as hostages in a parent's effort to gain material advantages in a settlement, or when they are used as weapons to satisfy an urge for revenge against the other spouse, you have a situation that has the potential to do a great deal of harm to the way a child values himself or herself.¹⁶³

There are several specific steps single parents can take to achieve what Gardner calls "genuine enhancement of self-esteem."¹⁶⁴ Many divorced parents, motivated by guilt, dote on their children or smother them with material goods. Gardner suggests that the best way to enhance a child's self-esteem is to help him gain competence in specific skills and talents such as music, sports, and hobbies.¹⁶⁵

Divorce usually creates additional responsibilities for everyone in the post-divorce household, including the children. These chores can become either a hassle or an opportunity for the children to feel genuinely useful. Roger and Darlene Duncan add that "verbal praise for the little things they do, such as putting away clothes, helping to clean up the room, helping in the kitchen, taking out the trash, working in the yard, will encourage your children and give them a sense of

¹⁶³ Hart, Children and Divorce, p. 108.

¹⁶⁴ Gardner, Psychotherapy With Children of Divorce, p. 274.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

responsibility as individuals and as a family."¹⁶⁶

Finally. Gardner suggests another means of enhancing a child's self-esteem: "One measure of parental affection is the frequency with which the parent wishes to be with the children."¹⁶⁷ A loving parent will want to spend a significant amount of time with his or her children. He goes on to say, "Recognizing that they have the power to make their parents laugh, to give them warm inner feelings, and to contribute to their pleasure in having a family, contributes to children's feelings of self-worth."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ T. Roger Duncan and Darlene Duncan, You're Divorced, But Your Children Aren't (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 92.

¹⁶⁷ Gardner, The Parents Book About Divorce, p. 140.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 228.

CHAPTER 3

The Divorce Recovery Group

Introduction

This chapter describes the development and implementation of the divorce recovery group. An explanation of how the material from chapter two was developed and the participants selected is followed by a summary of the twelve sessions. The participants' responses are taken from their homework assignments, evaluation sheets, and comments during the sessions.

Development of the Material

A major component of the Doctor of Ministry program is the Congregational Reflection Group (C.R.G.). One of their duties was to assist the writer in designing and implementing this project. Our first step was to acquaint ourselves with the current literature on the subject of divorce. The writer and the C.R.G. then began to organize this material which seemed to fall into two major categories: 1) the issues related to divorced parents and their children, and 2) the issues related to singleness and the divorce itself.

It was decided that the divorce recovery group should deal with the material related to parenting first. This material is more didactic and seemed better suited to the earlier and more leader-centered stages of the group. The remaining material was reserved for the latter stages of the group when the participants would be more comfortable with one another, more group-centered, and better able to discuss the more

personal and painful aspects of divorce.

Both the writer and the C.R.G. were astonished at the large amount of recently published material related to divorce. The most difficult part of our task was in deciding what to omit. Considering that the first meeting would basically be an orientation session, it was decided that a total of twelve sessions would be required to cover this material adequately.

Selection of Participants

The size of the group was limited to at least five but no more than seven members. It was felt that with less than five, some members may feel pressured to share.

All potential members within our church were personally invited. Some were not interested, and some were unable to commit themselves to the program at that time. Three responded positively. When the other two agreed to participate, no attempt was made to increase the group's size.

Upon agreeing to be part of the program, each woman was given a copy of the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (F.D.A.S.). Because the writer did not know every participant personally, each was asked to complete a brief questionnaire. (See Appendix K.)

Each participant was interviewed several weeks prior to the first session. The writer shared with them that he was going to use this material as part of his doctoral studies. He secured their permission to use their responses assuring them of complete anonymity. The results of the F.D.A.S were also reviewed . These results comprise part of their

individual case histories in chapter four.

Organization of the Twelve Sessions

Session One: "Let's Get Acquainted"

The first session was designed as a time to get acquainted and to explain how the group would function. The three participants who are members of our church knew each other, though not well. One participant knew one other and one knew no one in the group. As a way of introducing ourselves, the group joined in a short "ice breaker." (See Appendix A.)

This led to a discussion of their responsibilities to one another as group members. They were encouraged to come to each session prepared to participate. The writer emphasized that this was not a series of lectures adding, "If you get nothing else out of this group, you should become a better listener and communicator. There will be no pressure on you to respond, but when you do, be honest. We're not here to impress one another."

The writer then explained the use of the homework assignments. (See Appendix B.) These were short reading assignments designed to inform the members and to prepare them for the next session's discussion. The homework also included several essay questions designed to help them reflect on the written material in a more personal way.

The evaluation sheets were also distributed and the members instructed to complete them as soon after each session as possible. Each member was also given a sheet entitled, "My Goals For This Workshop" and was challenged to set goals for herself.

The writer explained that his job as group leader was not to

lecture but to steer the group through the subject matter. The group itself would have to consent to any major changes in direction.

The remainder of our time was spent discussing the church's attitude toward the divorced. The members were asked, "How has divorce affected your relationship with God? With the church?" Considering the newness of the group, their responses were quite candid. Some, like Carol, said their brokenness had drawn them closer to God and back to the church. Others agreed in part but felt the church was not as supportive as it should have been. One member seemed unable to distinguish the two.

Session Two: "What Are the Effects of Divorce on Children?"

The purpose of this session was to help the participants see that children view divorce differently than their parents. During this session, the members were introduced to several new concepts. One was the concept of divorce as crisis (pp. 45-47). This was presented to help them avoid the temptation either to ignore the divorce's impact on children or to assume that they are doomed as the "products of a broken home."

Despert's concept of emotional divorce (p. 21) was also discussed. The question was asked, "When do you think the process of emotional divorce began for you? For your husband? The responses varied greatly, but all were able to point to a definite time during their marriage when this occurred. For some, the emotional divorce involved a gradual drifting apart. Their children exhibited signs of perplexity and confusion. Others described homes where the conflict was open and bitter. For their children, the divorce came as no surprise.

Parents may have been emotionally divorced for years. For them,

the divorce may come as a relief. The children do not see it this way. Hart's material regarding the reasons why divorce is potentially damaging to children was shared at this point in the discussion. (See Appendix I.) Also included was the material on how a child's age affects his or her ability to cope with divorce (pp. 52-57).

The session ended with a discussion on what to tell the children. The members were shown three possibilities: 1) Allow your anger to cause you to give them a biased and distorted picture of what happened. 2) Offer vague generalities such as "It just didn't work out," and 3) Be honest with yourself and them.

As part of their homework, they were asked to examine Peppler's three questions: 1) How did this happen? 2) Do you still love me? and 3) How will my life change? This question generated greater oral and written responses than any during the twelve weeks.

Session Three: "Guilt and Fear in Children"

The goals of this session were to help the members understand why their children may be experiencing feelings of guilt and fear and to show them how continued conflict with their ex-husband can greatly hinder their child's ability to adjust.

The notion of children blaming themselves for the divorce was new to most of the participants. Even those who understood how it could happen said it was not a part of their own experience. The reasons for this became apparent as we explored the causes of guilt in children.

Feelings of guilt are caused by many reasons. (See pp. 57-59.) As these reasons were examined, only one member was able to relate

personally to these ideas. This was reflected in her participation and in her written evaluation where she stated, "I had to do a lot of self-examination." Of all the children in the group, hers was the youngest at the time of the divorce. Those with older children reported little or no feelings of guilt in their children. This is in keeping with the findings of chapter two that older children usually do not blame themselves for the divorce.

The homework questions asked, "Do you ever feel any resentment toward your children? When? To what extent were your children a factor in your divorce? Are they aware of this?" These questions generated some powerful responses. All four who have children at home acknowledged feelings of resentment and guilt. They were relieved and surprised to discover these feelings are common and natural, but the thought that their children may have already sensed their resentment was sobering.

The participants were also asked what fears their children expressed. As with guilt, the members' reports reflected the research findings that most fears are more pronounced in younger children and usually subside in time.

The discussion regarding the effects of parental conflict brought the ex-husbands into the picture for the first time. The members were shown the results of Wallerstein and Kelly's research pointing to ongoing conflict as a primary reason for children's failure to adjust well in the post-divorce family. (See pp. 47-49).

Many parents falsely assume that the divorce will, if nothing else, end the hostilities. The homework for this session included a list of factors that often fuel the fires of conflict: 1) The children. Their

very existence necessitates contact with one another and the children sometimes become the vehicle for expressing anger at one another. 2) The ongoing need to justify the decision to divorce. 3) The adversarial nature of the court system which causes parents to leave the courtroom even more bitter and resentful.

The participants were asked, "Are you still experiencing conflict with your ex? What are the causes? What are some ways you can help ease any tensions that still exist?" Their responses reflect a wide range of experiences.

Two of the members reported a good deal of conflict. One, not surprisingly, was Carol whose divorce was not yet final. Two members were experiencing almost no conflict. For Joan, whose step-daughter lives with her father, the divorce and settlement seemed final in every sense of the word. Esther's divorce and settlement were even more amicable. Her only complaint was her ex-husband's lack of interest in their child, but this was minor compared with the others. One member represented a median position. She reported some conflict (mostly related to visitation) but seemed to view it more as a source of irritation than conflict.

Session Four: "Anger, Discipline and Self-esteem"

For most children, adjusting to divorce involves dealing with anger. One goal of this session was to help the members understand why their children may be angry and to offer suggestions on how to cope with it. Anger often results in discipline problems. A second goal was to show how discipline is different for single parents.

Children of divorce become angry for many reasons. The members

were given reading material explaining the causes of anger (pp. 59-61) and were asked, "Do you see any relation between any of these and your child's anger?" Most of their responses centered around the changes in the family's income and life style.

Because it is not always expressed, anger often goes undetected. Included in the homework were the reasons children repress their anger and material explaining what happens when they do.

Members were also encouraged to examine their own attitudes about anger. The writer emphasized that anger is a God-given emotion. However, many Christians have difficulty accepting their anger and expressing it constructively. David Augsburger's book, Caring Enough to Confront, was suggested as an excellent primer on the subject.

Perhaps the most difficult parenting task is disciplining one's children. This is especially true for single parents. (See pp. 63-64.) They are often preoccupied, pressed for time, and less affectionate. Like some married couples, they tend to go from one extreme to the other, being too strict one minute and too lenient the next.

The participants were introduced to the terms reciprocal aggravation cycle and vicious circle of coercion. These terms describe a common scenario in single-parent families. The homework included material explaining why single parents become too lenient, too strict, or vacillate between the two.

The members shared how they perceive themselves as disciplinarians. Carol was experiencing serious problems with her son. She described him as "rebellious." She also recognizes that he is "hurt and frustrated" over the departure of his father. Ann has also experienced problems

in this area and described herself as "too strict." Mary's demanding work schedule makes it difficult for her to be strict when she is at home. Esther appeared to have the best relationship with her son describing them as "a team."

Joan was largely silent during this discussion. With no children at home, her life style is noticeably smoother. The contrast between her and the other four was a graphic illustration of why divorce recovery is more difficult for parents.

The members were cautioned to avoid the extremes in disciplining. They were encouraged to be both firm and loving. Some practical guidelines and a recommended reading list were included in their homework. (See Appendix J.)

Session Five: "Psychological Effects On Children"

The homework for this session included an explanation on how divorce can lead to a loss of self-esteem in children (pp. 65-67). The members discussed ways of enhancing their children's self-esteem. Much of the discussion concerned their own struggles in this area. They were asked, "What specific areas of responsibility do your children have? How much quality time do you spend with your children? How do you spend it? Do you enjoy your children?"

From the discussion, it was apparent that the pressures of job and the everyday household chores left little time for the children. Ann appeared to be the most conscientious of the group in this area. Carol was trying, but her efforts had backfired. As she put it, her son "doesn't show as much interest in doing things with me as I think he

should."

Another problem faced by children of divorce is reconciliation fantasies (p. 55) Carol's youngest and Ann's youngest still miss their fathers very much. For Esther's son, the divorce brought about little change since his father was "never here even from the beginning." This session also included a brief discussion on the subjects of hypermaturity and regression. (See pp. 54, 57.)

Session Six: "The Decision to Marry"

Session six marked a major shift in the focus of the group. Up to this point, the focus had been on the children and their needs. Beginning with this session, the focus was on the participants themselves. The purpose of this session was to lead them to a better understanding of why marriages succeed or fail. Most divorced women eventually remarry. Those who do must be able to understand what happened to their own marriage as well as the dynamics of a successful marriage. Even for those who remain single, understanding what went wrong can be an important step in bringing closure to the divorce process.

The success or failure of a marriage sometimes begins with the decision to marry. In their homework for this session, the participants were introduced to the theories of mate selection. (See pp. 18-21.) They were asked to describe how these theories explained their own choice of a husband. The written and oral responses to this material were incomplete and shallow.

The opposite was true as the group discussed Lantz and Snyder's comparison of immature and mature love. (See Appendix D.) The group

members took turns sharing their scores as the leader kept score. Predictably, the women saw their love as more mature than that of their ex-husbands.

Lantz and Snyder also list certain characteristics associated with marital success and failure. (See Appendix E.) Again, the ladies gave themselves a much higher rating than their ex-husbands. Another similar exercise included the participants' cultural background.

The level of participation during these exercises was the highest of any during the twelve weeks. This session was characterized by much laughter and some good-natured kidding. Ann obviously did not share the good humor and on her evaluation sheet explained why: "It was difficult for me to get into this. I did not want to do it because of having to think of things I want to forget about or thought I had forgotten. I want to live for today! Yesterday is gone forever."

Session Seven: "The Decision to Divorce"

People divorce for many reasons. Most hope to find a more satisfying way of life. However, many find themselves wishing the divorce had never taken place. The purpose of this session was to help the participants honestly face the question of why they chose divorce.

As a starting point, the writer included the work of two men who have been divorced. One is Jim Smoke. In his book, Growing Through Divorce, he lists seven basic causes of divorce. (See Appendix F.) As part of their homework, the participants were asked, "Which of these best describes your divorce? Reflect on the reason(s) for your divorce."

Another who has written on the subject is Bruce Fisher. In his

book, Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends, he describes divorced as falling into one of four categories. (See Appendix G.) The participants were asked, "Which best describes you? How has this affected your adjustment to the divorce?" Most of the written responses during this session were clear and well thought out. For some, this was clearly an emotional experience.

Most of the time in the session was spent listening to one another's "story." For Carol, this was a difficult experience. Her divorce was not yet final, but she had been separated about six months. She made it clear that she did not want the divorce. Using Smoke's labels, she described hers as both a "Victim" and "Little Boy, Little Girl" divorce. She described herself as a "good dumpee" even though she filed for the divorce. In this session and in others, she seemed obsessed with the need to know what she had done to cause her husband to want out.

For Ann, the problems of alienation and rejection began early in her twenty-three year marriage. She also described herself as a "good dumpee" because "in the beginning he wanted out--I did not." Using Smoke's typology, she described hers as a "Problem" divorce. Ann and her husband brought problems into the marriage that surfaced early. Later she added that hers also sounded like a "No Fault" divorce in that both of them had "had it with each other" long ago.

Esther was the most candid member in this session. She was the only person who described herself as a "good dumper." It was her choice and she was glad of it. Her only regret was that she waited so long. Ironically, her biggest problem is in letting go of her ex. Hers was definitely a "Little Boy, Little Girl" divorce.

Joan and her husband "had lots in common" when they got married. Then he began to change. These changes were so sudden and radical that Joan used the "I Was Conned" category to describe her divorce. She also described it as a "Problem" divorce because of the financial crisis brought on by her husband's drinking and gambling. In spite of this, Joan insisted that he wanted out and "was purposely trying to get me to end it." Thus, she described herself as a "good dumpee."

Mary was by far the quietest member of the group. She was also the calmest as she shared her thoughts and feelings about her divorce. She acknowledged that she was partly to blame. Still, it was her husband's irresponsibility and immaturity that led to the divorce. Like Esther, hers was a "Little Boy, Little Girl" divorce.

All five described themselves as "good." Four were "dumpees" and one (Esther) was a "dumper." All five filed for the divorce, but all five denied that they really wanted the divorce at first. Only Esther showed any willingness to relinquish her need to blame her husband for the divorce.

Session Eight: "Single-parent Family or Broken Home?"

The goal of this session was to help the members recognize the positive aspects of divorce. The tendency for many divorced parents is to see the destruction of the marriage as the destruction of the home. Those who do view the single-parent family as less than normal, as deviant. At the other extreme are those who de-emphasize or even deny all differences between two-parent and single-parent families.

The homework for this session included material dealing with the positive aspects of divorce. (See pp. 21-26.) The material on finances triggered a discussion on alimony and child support. For Carol, whose settlement was still pending, this was a matter of great concern. Joan reported that she was doing better financially. Even though her husband was well-paid, their finances had been a shambles due to his wreckless life style. Mary gave a similar report adding that she got more from her husband in child support than she did when they were married. With one less mouth to feed, she was doing better

This was not the case with Ann. She receives little child support, but manages to provide a good home for her children. But Ann is like Esther, Mary, and Joan in that all four seemed to feel better about themselves. Some had learned to "do more with less." Though by no means wealthy, they were all experiencing greater financial freedom.

Divorce also brings a new freedom in one's social life. Some of the participants enjoyed no longer being someone's "other half." They expressed the thought that what was important to them was the freedom to make choices about their friends. Joan discovered that her divorce ended many of her friendships: "They were 'our' friends." Now she is making new friends on her own terms.

The experience of divorce can also be an opportunity to rebuild one's self-esteem. Divorce and the events leading to it cause low self-esteem to be the most common experience among divorced persons. The good news is that divorce provides many opportunities to develop an even stronger sense of self-worth.

This was most evident in the lives of Joan and Esther who used the divorce as an opportunity to take charge of their lives. Ann and Mary were doing well, but struggling--especially in the area of parenting. Both were helped to see that much of their lack of confidence was unfounded; they had, in many instances, placed unrealistic expectations on themselves.

Carol's self-esteem was very low. The feelings of rejection, doubts about her abilities, the put-downs from her husband and now from her children continued to take their toll. To her credit, she was aware of the problem and was working on it in specific ways such as attending this group.

The difficulties of parenting were discussed in sessions two through five. In this session, the members were shown that because it is more challenging, single-parenthood offers the possibilities for even greater joy and satisfaction. All of the participants were working hard at being good mothers. As far as the writer could tell, they were doing a commendable job. What was needed was the willingness to acknowledge this for themselves.

Divorce can also be a new beginning. Several participants spoke with enthusiasm about how they were now "getting on with their lives." For Carol it was much too early for this even to be envisioned. The others, especially Joan and Esther, were at least able to show her the possibilities

Session Nine: "You and Your Ex"

The goal of this session was to explore the emotional and practical

aspects of relating to ex-husbands. (See pp. 32-36.) Divorce is never final for many people. They continue to fight as bitterly as before the divorce. For them, the divorce actually solved nothing. The same is true for those who are still in love with their ex-husband. In either case, the need is to let go, to reach the point where one's feelings for the other person are neutral.

During this session, the members discussed several factors that can facilitate this process. Among them were a good job, support groups, and understanding family and friends. Some spoke of physical changes such as selling items that were reminders of the past. Members were also encouraged to think of divorce recovery as akin to the grief process following death. A description of this material is found in Appendix H.

The participants were asked to reflect on these questions: "In what ways are you either lovingly or angrily bound to your ex? To what extent have you 'let go'?"

For Carol, this process had just begun. She had initiated divorce proceedings several times before but had always changed her mind. During this session she indicated that reconciliation was "not likely." However, she also stated that she was "accepting the fact that we will probably never try again."

Except for Mary, Ann had been divorced longer than the others. Earlier she reported that "emotional divorce" had begun quite early in the marriage. Still, she seemed to find it difficult to let go of her anger. In her oral and written responses, she insisted that her feelings

were neutral. From his knowledge of the situation, the writer knew this to be wishful thinking.

Esther also noticed that what Ann was saying and how she said it did not coincide. In her written evaluation of this session she stated, "She [Ann] was angry at her situation and at her ex but never would say so. She kept saying that God was very much in her life and he was making everything okay. She was covering up what she really feels." When the writer asked her why she didn't say these things to Ann in the session, she replied, "I know how she'd have reacted."

Mary reported that her feelings about Mike were "mostly neutral." Unlike Ann, Mary's demeanor was nearly stoical. Her only resentment toward him stemmed from his continual neglect of their children. Her personal feelings toward him seemed to border on pity.

Esther, like Mary, was married to a "little boy." Like Mary and Mike, she and Dan were high school sweethearts. Like Mike, Dan never bothered to grow up. Despite his irresponsibility and even his infidelity, Esther was having a hard time letting go of her love for Dan.

This was difficult for some in the group to understand. Esther went on to explain that she had married Dan when she was sixteen years old. He was like a father to her. When they divorced, there were almost no hard feelings. They even used the same attorney. Of the five group members, she was the most satisfied with her settlement. It was she who had changed, not Dan. As unpleasant as life had become with him, it was still hard for her to think of life without him.

Joan's marriage was the shortest of the five members. Like Esther, she was satisfied with her settlement. The alimony was paid in

a lump sum. They had no children together. Alex and his daughter moved to another part of the state shortly after the divorce. The other members were quick to see that the "bonds" that tied them to their ex-husbands were absent in her case. Therefore, her work in "letting go" was easier and virtually completed.

As Joan's case shows, "letting go" is made easier by the absence of the non-custodial parent. Custody and visitation arrangements often predispose families to increased conflict. The participants were reminded that their sole concern in these matters should be the welfare of the children.

This led to a discussion of both the father's and the mother's responsibilities regarding visitation. Mary, Ann, and Esther spoke of problems in this area. These mainly concerned schedules and the negligence of some of the fathers.

This session concluded with a discussion on money. Like children, alimony and child support provide a practical as well as an emotional bond between divorced partners. Some group members saw it as a necessary evil. As Esther put it, "I realize I couldn't make it without the money and it does make me mad." Several others shared this sentiment.

Session Ten: "The Emotions of Divorce"

The purpose of this session was to examine how divorce creates feelings of anger, guilt, and loneliness and to aid the members in exploring their own feelings.

For the divorced, anger is normal. (See pp. 27-29.) It is a God-given emotion, but unresolved anger can be most destructive. The

participants were shown three steps in learning to resolve anger: 1) Accept it. Own it as a part of your humanity. 2) Learn to express it in constructive ways that will not harm yourself or others. 3) Learn to forgive others.

The members were also shown why the divorced sometimes find it difficult to release their anger. They were asked, "How well do you understand your anger? How do you handle it?"

Four members of the group were able to own at least some of their anger. Carol and Esther were quite open about some of their angry feelings. Mary and Joan had already dealt with most of theirs. Ann, as in session eight, continued to deny any current feelings of anger: "Up until a year ago I was negative about him, but not now."

Divorce, especially for Christians, can produce strong feelings of guilt. At various times before and during the sessions, participants often asked about the Biblical view of divorce. It was during this session that the writer answered their questions and shared his own theological insights on the subject. (See pp. 5-15.) The emphasis was on grace. It was pointed out that both wallowing in one's guilt and efforts at self-justification remove us from the sphere of God's grace.

Divorced persons need to forgive their ex-partners. Only then can they experience God's forgiveness. Conversely, the washing away of our pain and bitterness can only come as we extend to others the forgiveness we have received from God.

The participants were asked, "In what ways have the sinful aspects of your divorce been exposed to God's grace and forgiveness? How did this come about? Have you forgiven yourself? The only member still

struggling with forgiving herself was Carol who, though not certain just how she failed, continued to blame herself for the divorce.

The rest showed a tendency, both in this session and throughout the program, to speak of their husbands' faults in derogatory terms while referring to their own as "mistakes." The need to justify and blame was evident in all five though to a lesser extent in Esther and Mary.

Despite the presence of children, single parents often experience loneliness. (See pp. 29-30.) The pain of loneliness can lead one on a frantic search for new relationships--the so-called "rebound" effect. The fear of rejection and the loss of relating skills causes others to go to the opposite extreme and become totally withdrawn.

The members were introduced to Fisher's concept of aloneness. Aloneness is reaching the point where you are comfortable by yourself. Staying at home is not hiding from other people; going out is not hiding from yourself.

The participants were asked, "How are you dealing with loneliness? Do you tend to withdraw or become overly involved with others?" The introverts (Joan and Mary) do not see loneliness as a problem; they see it as solitude and relish it. The extroverts (Esther, Ann, and Carol) are more aware of their lonely feelings. For Ann and Carol, the church is still the mainstay of their social life. Esther, the most out-going member, dates and leads an active social life.

Session Eleven: "Dating and Sex"

The purpose of this session was to help the members develop a healthy understanding of dating and sex. For many divorced persons,

the thought of dating again is distasteful and intimidating. But even during the difficult period of divorce recovery dating can be helpful. (See pp. 36-40.)

The members were asked, "Are you dating now? What problems has dating created for you? How has it helped you?" Esther and Joan, who date regularly, spoke of it as a boost to their egos. They added that it was nice finally to have someone to share their joys and problems with. Ann and Carol were not dating at the time. Those who were spoke of the problems it entails. Mary spoke of her ex-husband's jealousy: "It's okay for him to have a girlfriend, but he doesn't want me to date." Her children are not comfortable with the idea either. Esther and her son have not experienced this problem. She and her dates sometimes take him along.

Another problem related to dating is sex. The homework assignment included readings from Fisher and Rambo. Most of the members were not comfortable with Rambo's conclusion that it is better to have sex outside of marriage than to get married to have sex legitimately. They agreed that the teachings of Scripture must be the starting place for determining our standards, not our own thoughts and feelings.

During this discussion, the writer noticed a tendency on the part of everyone to intellectualize the subject. They talked freely but with a certain detachment in their voices. Their lips seemed to be saying, "This is the Eighties; I should be able to talk about sex," while their hearts were saying, "I'd rather not discuss it."

Session Twelve: "Remarriage"

The goal of this session was to help the participants better understand both the possibilities and the pitfalls in remarrying. (See pp. 40-45.) Three out of four divorced women eventually remarry. Do second marriages work? More second marriages end in divorce than first marriages. Can second marriages work? Yes, and when they do, they work very well. If the parties have successfully recovered from divorce, they are able to approach marriage with an even greater level of commitment and maturity. This is a very big "if."

For women, the single life can be a time of discovering or regaining one's identity, of becoming more self-reliant and self-respecting. The women in this group were a good example of this. Four were very young when they married and all went immediately from the parental home to the marital home. In varying degrees, all except Carol reported a renewed sense of individuality.

The homework for this session included readings from a number of writers regarding blended families and describing the dynamics of a healthy relationship. The writer stressed that the beauty of becoming whole again is that we are then free either to remain single or to remarry.

At the time of this session only Mary, Esther, and Joan were dating. Joan was the only one dating someone steadily, but neither she nor the others were even considering remarriage.

Conclusion

In the weeks that followed, the writer scheduled individual sessions

with each of the participants. The F.D.A.S was administered again and the results shared with them. The participants offered their overall evaluations of the divorce recovery group including their suggestions for future groups.

CHAPTER 4

Evaluation of the Divorce Recovery Group

Introduction

The purpose of the divorce recovery group was "to facilitate group members' understanding of and resolution for specific issues related to their divorce." The writer and the C.R.G. sought to identify the major issues facing single, divorced mothers. These findings are summarized in chapter two. Most of this information was condensed and given to the members in the form of weekly homework assignments such as the example found in Appendix B.

In the first section of this chapter, the writer will evaluate the selection and organization of the material in terms of its effectiveness in helping the group members understand and resolve these issues. This assessment will be based upon the oral and written responses to the homework assignments, the weekly evaluation sheets, and the writer's own observations.

Another purpose of the group was "to provide needed emotional support during the stressful time." In the second section, the group process will be examined using the same tools.

The final purpose of the group was "to change potential tragedy into a growth opportunity." In the third section, the writer will assess the growth of each participant utilizing the same tools as well as the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale.

Selection and Organization of Materials

Two of the evaluator's tools are the weekly evaluation sheets (Appendix C) and the homework assignments (Appendix B). Because of their importance to this project, an evaluation of their own usefulness is in order.

Weekly Evaluation Sheets

For every session but the first, the participants were given an evaluation sheet. After allowing for absentees, thirty-seven out of a possible forty-four forms were received. Most of the missing forms were Esther's who, after the fifth session, turned in only one. When asked why, she replied, "I just feel funny about it."

Question one asked the members to evaluate the written material as to what was most and least helpful. The responses were not always clear. For session nine, Carol answered, "The five stages of grief," with nothing to indicate whether this was helpful or not. On nine of the thirty-seven forms, this question was left blank.

The second question asked the members to evaluate the group process. They were asked to circle one of four choices along a continuum with the most negative responses being in the left-hand column and the most positive in the right. In reviewing these forms, it was discovered that this question was answered every time. It was also the only question requiring a non-written response. This indicates that a higher level of response could have been possible had the other questions been structured this way.

Though plentiful, the responses to question two were not that

helpful. In reviewing them, it is noted that every circled response is in one of the two right-hand columns--most in the extreme one. Not one participant offered even a mildly negative response to the second question.

This could mean that the group process really did go that well. But their written responses and their comments after the sessions indicate otherwise. This was especially true of sessions two and eight which will be examined in the section dealing with the group process.

In question three, the participants were asked to evaluate the writer as group leader. This question was left blank only seven times, but the responses grew less specific with each passing week. Some comments were specific and helpful: "If we start getting off track he brings us back without making us feel self-conscious." "He was helpful in channeling the discussing." "He let the group carry the discussion instead of leading the discussion himself."

While these responses were affirming, most members offered little in the way of constructive criticism. Some were able to do so, but their reluctance is evident: "Perhaps he could have kept the conversation on the material in session 8 better." "Are we sometimes straying too far off the topic?"

Their reticence could mean they had no other serious criticism. Joan assured the writer at the end of the program that she "honestly did not have any criticism to offer." But for Mary, the difficulty was in offering criticism: "I always hate to evaluate anybody."

The evaluation sheet was useful in that it allowed the members to

address the writer privately. On her evaluation for session two, Esther said, "I feel a little embarrassed because it seems that there are two of us who seem to dominate the conversation. I'm an easy talker. . . . I would like to know if I should go on as before or stop talking so the others can come into the conversation."

These comments were helpful. Before the next session, the writer spoke to her explaining that part of his job was to insure that everyone had the opportunity to participate but not to coerce them to do so. She was assured that if he felt she was dominating the discussion, he would politely cut in and he was assured that she would take no offense.

Another example is Ann's evaluation of session seven. In it she wrote that the writer "did not understand what I was expressing at one point, however other group members did, and since this is for us ladies, that is what counts. I suppose he can be excused since he is a man and thinks like a man." These comments signaled the need for a private conference where the misunderstanding was resolved.

The evaluation sheet, while helpful in these ways, could have been more so. Question one could have listed the sub-topics for each session. The participants then could have numbered them in the order of their usefulness or rated them on a scale from one to ten.

Question two was useless as a tool for analyzing the group process. Fortunately, the group members said in their written comments what they failed to say in answering this question. But the writer's and the group's immediate need for input were stymied as the members preferred the safety of written responses and private conversations to confronting one another.

Two possible solutions are offered. The writer recognized (too late) that appointing someone as "process observer" could have been a more open but less threatening way of dealing with the dynamics of the group. Another suggestion came from Joan (again, too late) who suggested that five or ten minutes at the end of each session could have been used to complete the evaluations. This would have guaranteed their completion and improved their quality as the session would have been fresh in their minds.

Homework Assignments

Each week, the participants were given a homework assignment. The reading portion was basically an edited form of the material in chapter two. This was followed by essay questions designed to help them apply the material to their own situation.

The overall response to the reading material was very favorable. As the writer looked at their responses, he often noticed many passages marked and underlined. The responses themselves gave good indication that the material was read and understood.

The questions provided a means for the participants to express their feelings. They also became the vehicle for an on-going dialogue with the writer who offered his observations and raised new questions on their homework papers.

Esther provides a good example of this material's usefulness. Though not an avid reader, she said of the material in general, "I really enjoyed reading it. It did not allow me to be lazy. It made me be honest with myself." Other participants offered similar comments.

The writer concludes that the homework assignments are a valid tool in evaluating the group's effectiveness. The evaluation sheets, while helpful, are less reliable. Therefore, the responses to the homework and the writer's own observations will be the primary means of evaluating the material, the group process, and the participants' growth.

Written Material

The material was readable and understandable, but was it helpful in moving the members toward resolution of the issues? A closer examination reveals certain weaknesses in some of the material. This is especially true of the material in sessions two through five regarding children.

The written responses to the material dealing with children's emotions (guilt, fear, and anger) were brief. Some of the few negative responses to question one of the weekly evaluation also mentioned this material as being "least helpful." As noted in the previous chapter, only Ann, whose child was the youngest of the group, found this material helpful.

Even less helpful was the material in session five dealing with reconciliation fantasies, hypermaturity, and regression. Again, from the discussion it was apparent that the ages of the members' children were a factor. The writer also believes this material should have been presented in less technical terms.

The writer realized that the material in sessions two through five would be applicable to parents only. What was not considered was the ages of the children. For this particular group, the material related to parenting could have been condensed into three sessions and geared

to the needs of older children. Any exceptions (such as Ann's child) could have been dealt with individually.

Sessions six and seven dealt with the decisions to marry and divorce. From his counseling experience, the writer knew these would be difficult subjects to approach. The material on mate selection theories was not well received. As with some of the children's material, the language was somewhat technical.

However, the three exercises utilizing Lantz and Snyder's material produced a much better response. (See Appendix E.) As noted in chapter three, this session was the most exciting of the twelve. But the effectiveness of this material in helping the divorced understand the dynamics of their divorce and remarriage is questionable.

As noted in chapter three, the members rated themselves much higher than their husbands. Session seven was a repeat of six as all five described themselves as not really wanting the divorce at first but feeling they had no other choice.

This may have been the case. The writer is aware that women are the plaintiffs in seventy-five percent of all divorce cases and that many of these cases involve men who want out but lack the courage to end the relationship legally. This was unquestionably the case for two of the participants. Nevertheless, during this session and throughout the program, all five invariably described their ex-husbands in pejorative terms while admitting only to "faults" and "mistakes" themselves.

All of this suggests that as interesting as this material may have been, it probably did little to change the way they viewed their

marriage and divorce. Instead of gaining new insights, the material only helped them articulate what they already believed about why their marriages failed.

In her evaluation of session six, Ann made some enlightening remarks: "It was difficult for me to get into this. I did not want to do it because of having to think of things I want to forget or thought I had forgotten. I want to live for today! Yesterday is gone forever."

What does this mean? At this point, the writer can only speculate. Perhaps Ann is just not ready to deal with this. Perhaps she is, but the material is too blunt, too direct. Perhaps it stimulated her thinking, paving the way for new insights in the future. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect her--or anyone--to gain such insights in a few hours of reading and discussion.

What is certain is that material dealing with the decisions to marry and divorce must be a part of these groups. The writer will continue to explore the subjects seeking more effective ways of dealing with these issues.

In session nine, the subjects of alimony and child support were discussed. In her evaluation, Carol suggested that a segment on budgeting and finances would be helpful. She said the same regarding what she called "dating guidelines" after session eleven.

The writer recognizes that Carol was not yet ready to deal with the emotional and painful aspects of her divorce. As her case history will show, she seems to have a "how-to" approach to life and even her faith. Nevertheless, her point is well taken, for the stated purpose of the group includes not only understanding but resolution. The writer can

easily see the value of offering this type of information in future programs.

Obviously, no divorce recovery group can thoroughly deal with every possible subject. The writer saw from these suggestions and the material on children that a list of all possible topics could be offered before planning the entire program. The participants could then help tailor the program to better suit their needs. Naturally, the writer would have to bear in mind that some material should be included regardless of how unpopular it might be.

In session ten, the emotions of anger, guilt, and loneliness were dealt with. The oral and written responses in this session were good, perhaps too good. The participants were noticeably dispassionate as they spoke of their bitterness and anger.

It occurred to the writer that like the material on divorce, this material may require a less direct approach. The writer now sees how this material could have been included in some of the more practical material. For example, as their children's pain becomes more evident, divorced parents usually experience feelings of guilt. Therefore, the subject of guilt could be woven into the discussion on the effects of divorce on children. The subject of anger could be a natural way to end the discussion on alimony since this session elicited some angry responses.

In our efforts to sharpen the focus of each session, the writer and the C.R.G. failed to see the interrelatedness of much of this material. A more helpful and realistic approach would have been to keep the

practical and easy to discuss matters on the written agenda (the reading assignments) and allow the leader to deal with the more sensitive material as it arises naturally in the discussions.

The most sensitive material is that found in session eleven related to sex. The written responses indicate that the members found the material to be relevant and thought-provoking, but (as noted in chapter three) the discussion was noticeably impersonal.

The responses on the homework papers and the evaluation sheets give no clues as to why this occurred. That the group leader is a pastor--a male pastor--is the most obvious and, at this point, the only explanation. If this is so, the writer must, as with some of the other material, search for more creative ways to approach the subject.

The final session concerned the possibility of remarriage and all it entails. Except for Joan, no one in the group was dating seriously at the time, and none were considering remarriage. Some did not see it as ever being possible. Thus, while the material may have been interesting, it was not perceived as being relevant as their responses showed.

This indicates that a better approach would be to offer this material in written form along with a suggested reading list. The material could then be dropped from the discussions leaving room for other material.

Homework Questions

The written responses to the homework questions indicate that this was both a helpful and enjoyable exercise for all five members. Sometimes they expressed themselves better on paper than in the discussions. This was especially true of Carol and Ann.

The biggest surprise was Esther. Having dropped out of school to marry at age sixteen, she is, by her own admission, not able to express herself well in writing. Yet, in terms of quantity, only Ann surpassed her in the length of her responses; in terms of quality, hers were second to none.

At times, however, the writer sensed that some of the responses, though well written, were a substitute for action. In terms of what the group was to accomplish, they were long on understanding, but short on resolution. For example, Carol described sessions three and four as having helped her to "realize" her resentment toward her children. But there was never any indication of what she planned to do about it.

Much of the fault lies in the questions themselves. Thoughtful as they were, many became the source of little more than good intentions. The writer can see how many of these same questions could be changed so that the homework actually does become work. In session two, the three common questions posed by children of divorce obviously touched a nerve. But it would have been more effective to have said, "Now go and discuss these with your children. What did they say?"

Group Process

The second purpose of the divorce recovery group was "to provide needed emotional support during the stressful time." Without this element, such groups are little more than classrooms. The content is vital, but the divorce recovery group provides an added dimension by dealing with the content on a personal level. In this section, the writer will evaluate the group's effectiveness in achieving this goal.

Before a group can even begin to offer this kind of support, it must become group-centered. In the opening session, the writer emphasized that this was not a series of lectures. Even the homework assignments were designed not only to inform but also to prepare the members to share with one another.

As group leader, the writer was aware of three possible hinderances to achieving group-centeredness: 1) his own natural talkativeness, 2) his pastoral inclination toward leader-centeredness, and 3) the group's willingness to allow him to assume that role.

Regarding the first of these hinderances, the writer found this surprisingly easy to overcome. He did his talking through the reading material. Apart from clarifying certain points, there was no need to expound on the material. It was easy to move quickly to the discussion questions.

The other two obstacles were easily overcome as well. By remaining seated in the group circle, the writer found it rather enjoyable to sit back and observe, to not have to carry the discussion. Once the participants saw that this would be the case, they readily assumed responsibility for the discussion.

The second question on the evaluation sheet, if nothing else, was a constant reminder to the members of the need to remain group-centered. Their comments on the evaluation sheets attest to its achievement: "I think David tries to give everyone a chance to say all they want to say." "I feel he listens and lets the group move on at their own speed." "Group leader encouraged increased participation and open sharing."

Comments such as these were common throughout the program.

However, several incidents during the program gave rise to serious doubts about the members' willingness to be honest with one another. In session two, Ann announced to the group that because of her relationship with God, she probably did not need to be there as much as the rest of them did. Some of the members were obviously incensed; others were embarrassed, but nothing was said.

During session eight, Esther used some mild profanity in expressing her feelings about her ex-husband. Joan and Carol strongly objected to this. Even though she backed down, it was plain from her disposition and her evaluation sheet that Esther felt that she was being condemned and the group stifled:

I feel that this group is under pressure. We aren't allowed to be ourself. I felt because I spoke my mind and tried to express myself that I was judged and condemned by one of the group. I should not have said it but sometimes things slip out. We are a group or should be. We should work together not run or pull out because of a small thing as that. It is not up to her to decide what should go on in our group. That is for all of us. If we are to get any place with this group we cannot have our hands tied.

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that in her evaluation of session seven, Ann expressed her anger over being misunderstood by the writer. What was even more disturbing than the incident itself was her unwillingness to share those feelings before the group.

In addition to these three incidents, the writer also noted in chapter three several instances where there was a marked tendency on the part of the members to intellectualize some of the material. So, while the communication was usually in abundance, it often lacked substance. The question is, why?

Two possible factors were the newness of this type of group to the participants and the sensitive nature of some of the material. These undoubtedly combined to make the task of achieving openness even more difficult than it normally is.

The key, however, was the group leader. In the incidents mentioned in sessions two and eight, the writer recalls being torn between his desire to turn the members loose on one another and his fear of destroying the group. This was especially the case in session eight when Joan threatened to leave the group. But because of the group's importance to this project, the writer's fears won out every time.

In reflecting on this, the writer sees himself as having been like a basketball team that, once ahead, no longer plays to win but only plays not to lose. By playing it safe, they often do lose. By playing it safe, the writer spared them some pain, but robbed them of an opportunity to grow as a group and as individuals. Esther was on target in her final evaluation of the group when she said; "It really helped me and I'm glad I went but I don't think it went to its full capacity due to the fact that we didn't let our hair down."

The real question is this: did this lack of openness hinder the group in terms of its stated purpose--to provide needed emotional support? Their actions in the three examples mentioned suggest that they may not have been ready for this kind of sharing if, indeed, they even needed it. Of the five participants, only Esther voiced any displeasure over the lack of openness. Therefore, to have forced this on the group could have proved counterproductive.

This does not excuse the writer's unwillingness to risk confrontation. However, the writer saw from these incidents that future groups should include time for allowing the members to establish their own ground rules.

One indication of the group's ability to provide support was the level of participation by each member. Carol and Ann never missed a session and Joan missed only one. Esther missed three. Mary missed five, but two were because of her vacation. All of them work full-time and all but one still have children at home. Adding to all this the enthusiasm that accompanied most of the discussions, the writer concludes that they saw themselves as a group, not as class members.

Their written evaluations indicate this as well. Mary, though divorced three years and recovering well said, "It helped to know that others had the same feelings I had." Joan, who is also beyond the crisis stage said, "I feel that my growth in the group came by my opening up and sharing my hurts and the experiences of my past marriage. I also feel that the growth came largely from listening to the experiences and ideas of others."

One who was in the stressful crisis stage was Carol. The others were aware of this and responded to her with much empathy. Being the shortest member of the group, Esther affectionately nicknamed her "Peanut." Her own comments reveal the group's supportiveness: "It really helped to know that others are trying to work through some of the same problems I have." The group may not have reached its full potential, but the key to its success was that they related not only to the reading material, but more importantly, to one another's experiences

as well.

Growth of the Participants

The third purpose of the divorce recovery group was "to change potential tragedy into a growth opportunity." In this final section, the writer will offer a brief case history of each participant assessing her growth during the twelve-week program.

In addition to the tools used in the rest of this chapter, the writer will also utilize the results of the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (F.D.A.S). The F.D.A.S. is a 100-question inventory developed by Dr. Bruce Fisher as a part of his doctoral dissertation on 1976. The scale is designed to help the divorced assess their progress in recovering from the divorce and is used by Bruce in workshops at the Family Relations Learning Center of Boulder, Colorado. A copy of the F.D.A.S is found in Appendix L and the participants' test results are in Appendix M.

Carol

At the beginning of the divorce recovery group, Carol and Jack, her husband of twenty-three years, had been separated several months and were in the process of divorcing. For Carol, the pain and disillusionment were much more evident than in the other participants all of whom had been divorced from one to three years.

For Carol, the biggest question is, why? She expressed her bewilderment by saying, "I have been taught that the only way you get a divorce was if your mate had committed adultery and you were a faithful and loving wife to him not as to cause him to do this. I do not realize what I did to cause him to stop loving me and want out of our marriage."

Despite Carol's attempts to assess her share of the blame, it all seems to fall on Jack. At five different times, Carol's written responses mention his irresponsibility, as when she said, "He wanted away from the responsibilities and problems of our home life."

She is also having difficulties with her teenage son who "thinks he is old enough and doesn't need anyone to tell him what to do." Like his father, he "shows disrespect by talking down to me and will not take on responsibility as he should."

Understandably, Carol's self-esteem is badly damaged. Later she said, "During the three years before my husband left, my self-esteem was almost destroyed. I didn't feel I could do anything correctly and had given up trying a lot of things because I knew it wouldn't please him."

The writer hesitated including Carol in the group since her divorce was not final. But since the other participants had been divorced at least one year, it was decided that her case would, if nothing else, offer an interesting comparison.

Carol's F.D.A.S pre-test results were surprisingly high. Despite her damaged self-esteem, she scored in the upper sixty-five percentile range. However, her post-test score shows a decline in this and four other categories. This usually means the participant was denying these feelings when taking the pre-test.

With the divorce still pending, Carol obviously could not deal with many of the issues in more than a superficial way. She is trying to rush her recovery and is seeking shortcuts through the grief process. Her busy life style--and even this group--were perhaps a necessary means of dulling the pain. This may also explain why she was more interested in

the more practical aspects of life, such as "how to stick to a budget" and "how to learn self-control."

Assessing Carol's growth is difficult. Her F.D.A.S. post-test indicates that she is becoming more honest with herself. Carol faithfully attended the sessions and invested a great deal of time and effort in the program. Others provided good role models for her and offered her hope. She, in turn, allowed the others to affirm and nurture her and gained some needed support.

The group provided Carol with fellowship and support--very necessary for this stressful time of life. However, the group would have been more helpful to her later on when she was ready to deal with the real issues facing her. While there was no harm done, she may fail to see the need for such a group in the future.

Ann

Ann and Roger divorced two years ago after twenty-three years of marriage. Like Carol, she describes those years as being very painful: "I was always made to have guilt feelings. During our years together, almost every day was a put-down. It was a real blow to my ego that he did not want me anymore, even though I didn't want him either."

Ann's greatest difficulty is her continuing anger and bitterness toward Roger. Still, she insists that "up until a year ago, I was negative about him. I experienced anger, resentment, bewilderment, confusion, hurt, bitterness, hate--very strongly." But now she says, "I feel neutral. He is someone who passed through my life at a point in time just like thousands of other people." Twenty-three years and two children is

hardly passing through one's life.

As with Carol, the writer had reservations about including Ann in the group. From prior counseling experiences, he questioned not only her ability to function within the group, but also whether or not it would be helpful to her. These fears were realized in the second session when she informed the group that because of her relationship with God she probably did not need to be there.

Ann's F.D.A.S scores show her as having been very well-adjusted going into the program and unbelievably so at the end as she racked up 479 out of a possible 500 points. If this is true, then she certainly did not need the group. However, it is obvious that Ann gave what she felt were the correct answers instead of those that reflected her true feelings. For example, she scored in the upper ninety percentile in the "anger" category. But when pressed about her apparent anger and bitterness toward Roger, she replied, "Why should I be angry?"

The writer finds it even more difficult to assess Ann's progress. Like Carol, she faithfully attended every session. In terms of volume, she wrote more on her homework assignments than any of the others. How helpful these exercises were is also hard to determine, for until it was called to her attention, she used large amounts of liquid paper causing the writer to wonder whom she was really writing for--herself or me?

Ann does illustrate the fallacy of the proverb, "time heals all wounds." She also illustrates that while some (like Carol) may not be ready for divorce recovery groups, others may still need help no matter how long they've been divorced.

Mary

Mary and Mike were high school sweethearts who were married fifteen years until their divorce three years ago. The writer wondered if, at this stage, she would be interested in the program. Apparently, she was. Even though she commutes over an hour each way to her job, Mary completed the program missing five sessions due to working late and her vacation. Even when she missed, she eagerly received the reading material and completed the homework assignments.

Mary describes herself as being "uncomfortable around a lot of people." She was certainly the quietest participant and shared less in her written responses than the others. Still, she found listening to the others "a helpful experience."

Like Carol, Mary suffers from low self-esteem. For her, this has been a life-time struggle and is not directly related to her divorce. Early in the program she said, "I don't have much self-confidence and I'm very critical of myself." Her F.D.A.S. scores indicate this as well.

The writer counselled Mary on several occasions during the twelve weeks regarding her self-worth. Her post-test scores show a considerable improvement in this area. She shared with the writer that being a part of the group was affirming in that it showed her how much she had grown over the past three years.

This was especially true regarding her disentanglement from Mike. Though somewhat resentful over his neglect of their children, her marriage is truly over as her responses and the F.D.A.S. indicates.

Mary achieved the highest overall gain of any of the participants--sixty-five points. The nationwide average, according to Bruce Fisher is

sixty-six. In many ways, she had already worked through some of the problems related to her divorce. The group provided her with a new perspective and helped her to recognize and own these gains. She also noted that such a group would have been more helpful to her when she was first divorced. But her improved scores indicate that such groups can be helpful even for those who have been divorced many years.

Esther

Esther and Dan were married when she was sixteen years old. They came from similar blue-collar backgrounds and there were no divorces in either his or her immediate family. She describes her feelings then by saying, "I thought I was in love like the story books. When I married, I thought everything would be okay. As long as you loved each other, you could make it through anything."

After twenty years of marriage, Esther filed for divorce. Their marriage was surprisingly free of conflict and it ended the same way. Of the five participants, her divorce was the most amicable. This was the cause of her most pressing need--to bring closure to her marriage emotionally. At the beginning of the program, she identified this as a major problem: "I can't let go. I don't want him back to live with. I don't want him responsible for my happiness, but I can't seem to think of myself without him."

However, by the ninth week she was able to say this:

I think the bond is in that he was the only one for twenty years. I think it was dependence. But I know now that after almost two years of divorce I don't need him emotionally. I don't feel bound to him anymore. The best part is I depend on myself for happiness, not him. I am in control--he isn't. It feels good.

Esther's F.D.A.S. scores indicate some improvement in this area, but she still has not completely let go of Dan. However, the group was useful in helping her to recognize this need and begin to work toward resolving the issue. Her gains, though modest, are solid. More importantly, she is moving in that direction.

Like Mary, Esther showed a significant overall gain on her F.D.A.S. scores--fifty-five points. Her largest increase came in the area of her anger at her ex-husband. During the program she realized that she no longer needed to blame Dan for the divorce.

The group itself was, in some ways, a disappointment to Esther, and this may be the reason her post-test score was lower in the social intimacy section. Still, Esther viewed it as a positive experience: "I really feel good about it. It really helped me and I'm glad I went." This was evident in the quantity and quality of both her written work and her participation during the discussions.

Esther is the best illustration of the divorce recovery group's potential. She not only gained understanding, she did something about it. She was a resource person for others. Though a stranger to the other participants, she not only fit in, but also provided much of the group's leadership.

Joan

Joan and Alex were married six years before they were divorced a year ago. According to Joan, he changed drastically: "I thought we had so much in common, but it turned out we did not. We were both Christians --I thought. However, it did not take me long into our marriage for me

to discover that he was not."

Even though she has been divorced only one year, she is better adjusted than the other participants. By this the writer means that she is emotionally free from Alex, needing neither to love nor to hate him.

Her road to recovery was easier than it is for the others. They had no children together and Alex has remarried and moved away. Her alimony settlement was paid in a lump sum eliminating the need for any contact at all. Her case is a powerful example of why divorce recovery is much more difficult for those with children.

Socially, Joan has adjusted well to single life. She says, "It was really hard at first because all our friends were 'his' friends. I was an extreme introvert when I married. Now I am really reaching out and enjoy being with people." She has even become the outreach director for a nearby church's singles group.

Joan's F.D.A.S. pre-test scores indicate a high level of adjustment. The writer was surprised (as was Joan) to see the overall drop in her post-test scores. When questioned about it, Joan revealed that she had just ended a fairly serious relationship. The writer believes that many of her feelings about this relationship carried over into her responses in the post-test.

Joan is naturally quiet and reserved. Hers is the kind of genuine confidence that stems from a healthy self-image. Despite her quietness, Joan was an asset to the group. Her responses were helpful. She was and still is a source of strength for her friend, Carol. The writer sees this willingness to reach out to others as a vital factor in her own recovery.

Despite her obvious recovery, she found that there was still room for improvement. At the end of the twelve weeks she reported that she, too, had grown by "opening up and sharing my hurts and experiences of my past marriage."

Conclusion

Most of the material utilized in the twelve sessions was helpful to the participants. Some of the material could have been presented differently or at another time during the program or even deleted. The same is true of the homework questions. Most of them were helpful, but some could have been more task-oriented.

While not achieving a high level of openness and honesty, the group members offered support and empathy to one another. They grew and learned not only as a result of the didactic material but from one another as well.

CHAPTER 5

Concluding Comments

Summary

With the possible exception of war, divorce is perhaps the greatest manifestation of the fallenness and depravity of the human heart. It is often just that--a small scale war, the results of which are no less painful for its victims. Marriage begins with joy and hope as the church gathers to bless and witness the union and to hear those familiar and beautiful promises to love, honor, and cherish "till death do us part." But all too often the church again becomes witness to the marriage's slow and painful death.

Far from being an overstatement, divorce is, in many ways, worse than death. The feelings of disillusionment, anger, rejection, guilt, and worthlessness can last for years and greatly hinder one's effectiveness as a parent. Thus, the children of divorce are often physically abandoned by one parent and emotionally abandoned by the other, lessening their own chances of achieving a successful marriage.

This is a tragic and sinful breaking of God's ideal: two people living in a lifetime covenant of companionship. It is sinful in its causes and effects. Because it is, the church has often failed to respond to the hurts and needs of the divorced, fearing that such actions could be seen as lending its approval to divorce.

Divorce is a far cry from God's ideal, but so is ignoring or ostracizing those who are divorced. As with every other manifestation of our

sinfulness, the church's ministry to the divorced is within the context of grace which never ignores the ideal but meets us at the point of failure.

As the church rejoices with those at the wedding it must also weep with those in the process of divorcing. It must also be willing to minister in specific ways by addressing the emotional and practical needs of those living in the post-divorce family. It is this conviction that provided the impetus for this project/dissertation.

Professionals have been studying the needs of the divorced and their children for years. Their findings are usually hidden away on bookshelves and in professional journals. The divorce recovery group described in this work was an effort to bridge the gap between the professionals and those in need of this information.

Yet, the divorced need more than information; they need understanding and support. Therefore, the writer envisioned this as being more than a study group. Rather, it was designed to be a growth group emphasizing the need for both information and support.

Specifically, the goals of the group were those described by Bonkowski and Wanner-Westly as "to facilitate group members' understanding of and resolution for specific issues related to their divorce, to provide needed emotional support during the stressful time, and to change potential tragedy into a growth opportunity."¹ This definition provided direction for the group's planning and implementation as well as the

¹ Sara E. Bonkowski and Brenda Wanner-Westly, "The Divorce Group: A New Treatment Modality," Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 60 (Nov. 1979), 552.

criteria for evaluating its effectiveness in chapter four. There, the writer noted many possible changes in both the content and presentation of the information. These and other recommendations are summarized in the following section.

Recommended Changes

In chapter four, the writer briefly noted some of the possible changes in the material and format of the divorce recovery group. This final section is a summary of these and other recommended changes in the program.

Content

The evaluation sheets were used primarily as a tool for this project/dissertation. However, they proved to be helpful in evaluating the group process from week to week. The participants often used them to communicate with the group leader. With certain changes, such evaluations could be useful to any type of growth group.

The first question was not specific enough. The writer noted the possible changes on p. 92. One of the participants also suggested they be filled out at the end of the sessions. These changes will definitely be implemented in any future groups. However, the evaluation sheets should not be a substitute (as they were with this group) for honest disagreement and confrontation.

The reading portions of the homework assignments helped the participants prepare for the discussions and eliminated the need for a lecture on the material. The questions encouraged them to read and respond to the material knowing the group leader would be checking it. This type

of accountability led to good responses throughout the program. Thus, the writer will continue to use this method in future groups.

As noted in chapter four, the questions in the homework could have been more task-oriented. The present format kept some of the material in the realm of the theoretical. In reorganizing the material, the questions will be restructured to allow both written and practical responses.

The material regarding emotions does not lend itself to this type of format. The section on anger, for example, allowed the participants to talk about their anger without expressing any anger. In future groups, this material will be deleted from the homework assignments and become part of the leader's agenda. He or she will then be able to weave this material into the discussion in a less direct manner.

As mentioned in chapter four, the writer will continue to search for more effective ways of helping the divorced understand the dynamics of their own marriage and divorce. The majority of divorced persons remarry. For them, and even for those who don't, it is vital that they come to a realistic understanding of what happened.

Group Process

This was the writer's first attempt at leading a group of this type. The most surprising discovery was the ease with which the group itself was able to carry the discussion each week. With some minor corrections, the writer sees this as a superior method of leading these and other types of groups.

The problems with the group process were elaborated in chapter four. Several incidents pointed to a lack of openness between some of the

members as well as an unwillingness to confront one another. The writer sees these problems as largely his own fault. The desire to see the project succeed and the fear of losing some of the members caused him to become more of a peacemaker than a facilitator. While not wishing to drive a group beyond its own ability, the writer will allow and even encourage more honest confrontation in future groups.

To facilitate this process, the writer intends to include in the first session a time for members to establish their own ground rules. Once they have made this contract between themselves, it will be easier to appeal to their own rules as to what is and what is not allowed.

Another improvement will be the use of a process observer. This will be a different group member each week whose job will be to make notes on the members' interaction with one another and report to the group at the end of the session. Sharing this duty with the participants will make them more aware of the group's dynamics and is more in keeping with the concept of group-centeredness.

A final suggestion came from one of the participants. After the twelve weeks, the writer and his wife hosted a small dinner party for the participants. Later, Esther pointed out that everyone seemed more relaxed and genuine. She attributed this, in part, to the setting. The divorce recovery group had met in the church fellowship hall. Esther suggested that a warm, friendly living room would have been an improvement over "sitting in a circle on hard chairs."

Selection of Participants

Of the five participants in this group, three are members of our

congregation. One of them invited a friend, and the fifth is friend of the writer's. They were selected at random with little consideration as to their suitability for such a group. The evaluation of their personal growth offers some clues as to the makeup of future groups.

The project was limited to single, divorced mothers. Among the divorced there are several possible combinations. Groups could be limited to men, women, parents, or open to men and women. One of the members suggested that a mixed group would have been more helpful. However, because of the specialized nature of some of the material, it seems that as the circle widens to include more, the material will also have to become more general in nature.

Once the basic target group is established, other limitations will be placed on future members. The writer hesitated allowing Carol to participate since her divorce was not final. Her responses and the F.D.A.S. scores indicate she was not yet ready to deal with the more meaningful and perhaps painful issues of her divorce.

One could argue that the group did offer her support and did no harm. This is true, but she was getting a great deal of support from the church and other friends. Now that she has gone through such a program she may not wish to do so later when it could be more beneficial. For these reasons, the writer will limit future groups to those who have been divorced at least three months.

At the other extreme were those like Mary who has been divorced for three years. She had already passed the crisis stage and was progressing well long before the group began. Still, it caused her to begin dealing

with her low self-esteem and helped her recognize and appreciate the gains she had already made. Joan was another example of one who, though doing well, found the group helpful. Therefore, there will be no effort to exclude anyone from future groups because their divorce was too long ago. If they seek such help, they probably need it.

But not everyone who seeks help really wants it. Growth groups are not group therapy. They are for those who are basically well but in need of help with the everyday problems of life. Those with severe emotional or personality disorders will not only fail to find help in such groups, but they may also disrupt the group as well.

While Ann is not severely disturbed, she sometimes showed an unwillingness both to identify with the group and to face her problems honestly. As with Carol, there was no harm done, but she does illustrate how one member can easily bring a small group down around himself.

The writer will deal with these potential problems in the pre-test interview, an area where there is also room for improvement. In the future, the F.D.A.S. will be used to help the members formulate specific goals for themselves during the program. This will help them assume greater responsibility for their own recovery (which in itself is therapeutic) and provide a better basis for evaluating their progress during and at the end of the program.

Personal Ministry

As helpful as the divorce recovery group was to the participants, it was more so to me, for it resulted in many new insights. The writer had hoped to gain a better understanding of what the divorce experience

is like for both adults and children. Through the research, he became aware of not only what they experience but also why. While the divorce recovery group did not add to this knowledge, seeing these truths lived out in their daily experiences caused this knowledge to come to life.

Not having been divorced, the writer still cannot say, "I know just how you feel." But given the uniqueness of the experience for each person, it is uncertain whether anyone can really say that. Still, the divorce recovery group has made me more sensitive both to the emotional and to the practical struggles they face. This knowledge has already proved beneficial in many individual counseling sessions.

The writer also expected to gain some much needed experience in leading small groups. As shown in chapter four and earlier in this chapter, there were many mistakes made. Nevertheless, it proved to be a positive experience for me as the the group leader. The shortcomings have encouraged me to become a better student of group dynamics and to continue using such groups in my ministry.

Throughout the twelve weeks, as each one shared her story, the writer was constantly reminded of just how painful and tragic divorce can be and in some cases how unnedessary. Sometimes, like surgery, it is necessary before healing can begin. The church must continue to recognize this and respond accordingly. But we must also continue to model and teach God's ideal: a lifetime covenant of companionship. As a result of this experience, the writer is now, more than ever, committed to encouraging and instructing believers in the art of family living and to ministering to those whose families have been disrupted by divorce.

In chapter one, the writer noted that his leading of the divorce recovery group would be in keeping with his "pastoral role" (p. 5). In an attempt to avoid sermonizing and to be nondirective, this role was minimized. Specifically, there was little emphasis upon spiritual growth and formation during the twelve weeks. This omission is serious and regrettable.

The writer clearly sees that such an emphasis is in keeping not only with his role as pastor but also with the expectations of the participants. As a crisis, divorce can be an excellent opportunity to examine one's relationship with God and work toward improving it. This emphasis will certainly be included in future groups.

The divorce recovery group also raised the issue of having an ongoing singles group within our church. Practical considerations aside, the writer tends to see such groups as a form of segregation. Singles are a welcome and vital part of our church family. They serve as deacons, Sunday School teachers, choir members, and in every capacity no differently than the rest.

The writer's personal feelings about the future of the divorced can best be described in terms of "realistic optimism." He is optimistic, for like the refiner's fire, divorce can result in growth and renewal at every level of one's existence. This optimism is guarded by the reality that while such changes are always possible, they are never inevitable. May God in His sovereign grace use this project/dissertation to transform that possibility into reality for many of His people.

APPENDIX A
"Icebreaker"

BEGIN NOW...

READ THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR NAME. PREPARE A RESPONSE FOR EACH QUESTION BY WRITING IN EACH SPACE. BE PREPARED TO SHARE YOUR RESPONSES WITH US!

What feelings do I have when I hear my name called?

When do I enjoy my name the most?

Suppose I had to change my name. What name would I choose? For what reason?

APPENDIX B

Sample Homework Assignment From Session Three

Children and Guilt

Many children, especially preschoolers and young children, feel guilty over their parents' divorce. Surprised? You shouldn't be; not when you consider that children are introduced to the ideas of guilt and blame very early in life. Therefore, it's only natural that when the separation occurs, they tend to think of it in terms of who is to blame.

In session two, we saw how young children tend to be "ego-centric." That is, they see the world only through their eyes. Therefore, they tend to exaggerate their own role in causing the divorce.

Sound illogical? To us it is, but as Cynthia Longfellow says, their natural self-centeredness causes them to "conceptualize the divorce as if it has happened between them and their parents or as a result of their own wrongdoing."

There are other reasons why children blame themselves:

1. They've been bad. Sure they have! Aren't we parents forever correct-
int our children? Children may be keen observers of life, but they're
poor interpreters of it. Therefore, they may see a connection between
their father leaving and something as minor as forgetting to straighten
up their room or spilling their milk.
2. Child psychiatrist Richard Gardner says, "Implicit in the statement,
'It's my fault' is the notion of control. Such children feel helpless
to change their parents' minds regarding the divorce decision. If, how-
ever, they can convince themselves that they were the cause - that some-
thing they did brought about the decision to separate - it follows that
there is something they can do to bring about a reversal of the decision.
3. Children need to feel secure. Having perfect parents helps and this
need for security partly explains why children idealize their parents.
By blaming themselves, Gardner says, children can still "view their
parents as perfect. And if the parents have the need to present them-
selves as such (by never admitting defects, for example), then such

tendencies on the children's part may be enhanced."

4. Some children feel guilty because their mother, at times, feels resentment toward them. Gardner suggests that a single mother "may resent her children for their very existence lessening as they do her chances for remarriage, restricting her dating, necessitating her having contact with their father, and providing her with new responsibilities she might prefer to do without."

5. Guilt is often experienced by children when they feel they've been disloyal to one or both parents. According to Gardner, "When the separation occurs, children may find themselves in a situation where their loyalty is openly tested, where they are required to make decisions and take actions that reveal without question their preferences. . . . Some children take the side of whichever parent they are with at the time in order to avoid alienating that parent; but they will at the same time feel guilty over their disloyalty toward the absent parent."

6. Often, a child is a factor in his parents' divorce. Suppose a child learns or even suspects he wasn't "planned?" Suppose his parents separate soon after his birth? Suppose he hears his parents arguing over how he should be raised? When he gets older, he is likely to feel that his presence contributed to the breakup.

For younger children, the problem of guilt is not only more intense; it is doubly frustrating because it is virtually impossible to convince them it isn't true. Regardless of what you tell them, they know deep down inside that they're at least in part to blame for your divorce.

Questions: Have your children ever blamed themselves for your divorce?

Maybe, but I don't remember them ever telling me or indicating to me that they felt it was their fault.

Do you ever feel resentment toward your children? When?

No, not toward my children but I do feel resentment toward their father because I'm left to raise 2 children by myself and he is free to do what he wants without any responsibility. I don't resent them because of this situation nor would I let their father have custody of them.

To what extent were your children a factor in your divorce? Are they aware of this? I think I was too busy with them and taking care of them to give my husband the time and attention he needed. However, he never helped with the children or taking care of the house, cooking, etc and I was working full time and going to school part time. I never had any free time. I don't think my children are aware of this.

The Effects of Parental Conflict On Children

If you're like most divorced parents, you probably spent a lot of time wondering if you should stay married "for the sake of the kids." Gardner suggests that "parents who are miserable living together are not doing their children any favors by 'staying together for the sake of the children.'" In the long run, it's not a good idea for parents to remain in a conflicted marriage for the sake of the children if (and this is a big "if") the alternative is a stable, conflict-free single-parent home.

I emphasize the word "if" in the above statement because too many couples assume that the divorce will mean the end of their conflicts. For many couples, the conflicts actually increase and intensify. Wallerstein and Kelly found that this post-divorce conflict is much more damaging to children than simply living without the absent parent.

So then, one might say that children whose parents continue (or even escalate) their conflict after the divorce are going from the frying pan into the fire. Several factors serve to fuel the fires of post-divorce conflict:

1. The children. Their very existence usually necessitates some contact between you and your ex. Unfortunately, one or both parents may use a child as a "spy" or as a means of expressing anger at one another.
2. Many divorced people desperately need to justify their decision to get a divorce. This need may cause them to continue to deal with their ex in anger.
3. The divorce process itself is another culprit. As Daniel Calvin says, "The adversary nature of our divorce system especially extended into the issue of child custody, helps to perpetuate a climate of animosity between persons who already have proven they cannot get along as husband and wife To the extent that the system casts divorcing parents in the roles of enemies and expects them to be unable to cooperate, a self-fulfilling prophecy is created."

Questions: On a scale of one to ten, rate the level of conflict present in your home in the months prior to your separation. Using the same scale, rate the level of conflict between you and your ex over the past few months. How do they compare? To what do you attribute the difference? Then - 8, now - 5

At times there is still Conflict but not as much as when we were married My ex-husband can't seem to adjust to the fact that my home is not his home and that he can't come there anytime he wants to. The reason the level of conflict is lower is because we aren't living together anymore and don't see each other as often

Are you still experiencing conflict with your ex? What do you think are the causes? Yes, the major causes are:

- 1 My dating and leaving the kids at home or with grandparents. He thinks I should stay home until they're grown
- 2 His drinking

You cannot control the actions or attitudes of your ex. What are some of the ways you can help ease any tensions that still exist?

Have just as little contact with him as possible and don't let him know what I am doing or where I am going. My only contact with him should be concerning the kids

Children and Fear

Even at its best, childhood is often a frightening experience. The world is large and complex to children and they are very much aware of their vulnerability and dependency on their parents. Divorce only increased their awareness of this.

Naturally, then, most children fear they will be abandoned. Ridiculous? Not really. Many of the children in Wallerstein and Kelly's study "concluded that if the marital tie could dissolve, the parent-child relationship could dissolve also."

Earlier, we saw how younger children especially tend to see the divorce as happening between them and their parents. In other words, they see the departing parent as abandoning them. In some instances, this is an accurate picture. In either case, the natural response of the child is, "What will happen to me now?"

Of course, they may not come right out and express these fears. They may become overly concerned about basic material needs such as food or clothing or about the distant future such as whether they'll be able to go to college. According to Gardner, they also may "involve themselves in various maneuvers designed to increase the affection for them of each of their parents."

Fortunately, most children see, after a while, that most of their fears are unwarranted. This will especially be true to the extent that life with you is a pleasant and rewarding experience. It may take some time, though. Gardner suggests that children overcome their fears more quickly when they continue to have a good relationship with both parents and they can see that they are still available to them in spite of the

separation. Keep in mind that their fears may not be rational. You still need to take them seriously.

Question: Have your children directly or indirectly expressed any fears regarding your divorce?

When I started dating they didn't like me going out and one of them made a comment that first Dad left them and now I'm not always home. They seem to have adjusted to this now and I think they know I'll never leave them

How can you help them overcome these fears?

By reassuring them that I will always be there to take care of them and do things with them I think their Dad had been telling them I should be home with them all the time because he doesn't like me dating. They like the guy I'm dating and I think that has made a big difference.

APPENDIX C

Sample Evaluation Sheet

Evaluation Sheet - Session 2 Name Eat her

1. Evaluate the written material (homework) for this session. What was most helpful? Least helpful?

*The material on children and divorce was most helpful.
I didn't find any of it yet to be helpful.*

2. Evaluate the meeting itself by circling one category for each statement:

LEADERSHIP WAS	Dominated by one person	Dominated by the group	<u>Centered in about half the group</u>	Shared by all members of the group
COMMUNICATION WAS	Badly blocked	Difficult	<u>Fairly open</u>	Very open
PEOPLE WERE	Phony	Hidden	Fairly open	<u>Honest and authentic</u>
THE GROUP WAS	Avoiding its task	Loafing	Getting some work done	<u>Working hard</u>
I FELT	Misunderstood and rejected	Somewhat mis-understood	Somewhat accepted	<u>Completely accepted</u>

3. Evaluate the group leader. In what ways was he helpful? A hinderance?

I feel he listens and lets the group move on at their own speed but if we start to get off track he brings us back with out making us feel self conscious.

4. Other comments or suggestions:

I feel a little embarrassed because it seems to fall each time that there are two of us myself and another woman who seem to dominate the conversation. I'm an easy talker and she seems to be. I try to wait for them to talk but they don't seem to want to. I would like to know if I should go on as before or stop talking so the other can come into the conversation.

Source for question two:

Clyde H. Reid, Groups Alive--Church Alive (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 60.

APPENDIX D

A Comparison of Significant Characteristics
That Engender Immature and Mature Love

Immature

Mature

1. Love arises through the ideas of the one and only, love at first sight, and love wins over all.

H-4

W-4

2. The love relationship is characterized by considerable ambivalence, with alternate feelings of attraction, indifference, or repulsion. . . .

H-3

3. The love relationship is rooted primarily in sexual attraction. The concern is with personal sexual satisfaction. A pronounced tendency for sexual involvement to remain static is present, since the quality of the involvement is egocentric. . . .

H-4

W-1

4. The love relationship is characterized by considerable jealousy, insecurity, and fears regarding the continuance of the relationship.

H-3 W-3

5. The love relationship tends to be exploitative with considerable using of each other for own ends.

H-3

W-1

6. The love relationship is characterized by considerable idealization based on fantasy, with marked tendency to distort the reality of the other person and to fall in love with the distorted image.

H-3

W-4

1. Love is an emergent experience that grows out of interaction with a realistic understanding of the relationship.

2. The love relationship is characterized by relatively consistent feelings once the relationship has been established. . . .

W-4

3. The love relationship is concerned with sexual satisfaction as one aspect of the total relationship. Sexual involvement is not static, but takes on more meaning as the relationship evolves, since there is a pronounced tendency to be concerned with the sexual and nonsexual needs of each other. The sexual involvement is much more relationship-centered than egocentric.

W-3

4. The love relationship is characterized by mutual trust, feelings of confidence, and security in each other.

H-1

W-1

5. The love relationship is oriented toward acceptance of each other as persons deserving dignity and respect. There is an absence of using each other as commodities.

W-2

6. The love relationship is characterized by an identification and by pride based on the favorable qualities that have been developed and realized.

7. The love relationship is characterized by marked tendency to change the partner and to impose one's values on the partner without regard to the other's wishes. H-4 W-3

8. The love feeling is characterized by sensing that one may be in love with more than one member of the opposite sex at one time. H-2

9. The love relationship is characterized by overt competitiveness toward the other partner, as well as feelings of repressed envy and the feeling that the achievement of one partner detracts from the desirability of the other. H-2

H-28

W-16

7. The love relationship is characterized by the tendency to accept differences as potentially enriching the union.

8. The love feeling is oriented toward a single member of the opposite sex. H-2 W-4

9. The love relationship is characterized by pride in the identification with the achievements of each other. Thus as each member achieves something new, the other member has the feeling of sharing in the new achievement.

H-2

W-4

H-5

W-18

Source:

Herman R. Lantz and Eloise C. Snyder, Marriage: An Examination of the Man-Woman Relationship. 2nd rev. ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969), pp. 129-31.

APPENDIX E

Characteristics Associated With Marital Success
and Failure

Personality characteristics associated with marital success:

- H-4 W-4 1. A willingness to assume responsibility.
- H-4 W-2 2. An ability to make decisions with a minimum of difficulty.
- H-1 W-2 3. An ability to overcome feelings of anger in oneself.
- H-3 W-4 4. A sense of humor.
- H-2 W-4 5. An ability to demonstrate affection.
- H-14 W-16

Personality characteristics associated with marital failure:

- H-2 W-0 1. An unhappy temperament, which is indicated by the tendency to be pessimistic rather than optimistic.
- H-3 W-1 2. Neurotic behaviors, which are indicated by the tendency of an individual to be touchy, grouchy, lonesome, easily hurt, and bothered by useless thoughts.
- H-3 W-0 3. Dominating and domineering traits which are indicated by the tendency of an individual to have to get his own way even to the extent of completely disregarding the feelings of others.
- H-3 W-0 4. A critical and inconsiderate attitude toward others, which is indicated by the tendency of an individual to find fault with and disapprove of the behaviors of others without regard for their feelings.
- H-0 W-4 5. Lack of self-confidence (particularly on the part of the husband), which is indicated by the tendency of the individual never to face trouble alone and to always ask others for advice.
- H-1 W-0 6. Extreme self-sufficiency, which is indicated by the tendency of the individual to face trouble alone and avoid asking others for advice.
- H-12 W-5

Cultural background characteristics associated with marital success:

- | | | |
|------|------|---|
| H-3 | W-4 | 1. Couples who have been reared in the country rather than the city. |
| H-1 | W-1 | 2. Couples possessing similar levels of education, with the highest educational levels having the greatest likelihood of successful marriage |
| H-3 | W-3 | 3. Couples who are similar in age, with the best adjustment occurring when the husband is a little older than the wife, the husband is at least twenty-two years old at marriage and the wife is at least twenty. |
| H-3 | W-3 | 4. Couples who have had no previous marriages. |
| H-2 | W-2 | 5. Couples who display a pattern of church attendance, particularly if both attend the same church. |
| H-1 | W-1 | 6. Couples who regard their childhood and the marriage of their parents as having been happy. |
| H-1 | W-1 | 7. Couples who have had a strong positive feeling for their parents. |
| H-2 | W-3 | 8. Couples who received firm but moderate discipline as children. |
| H-3 | W-3 | 9. Couples who have had parental approval of their marriage. |
| H-2 | W-2 | 10. Couples without a pattern of divorce among their relatives. |
| H-21 | W-23 | |

Source:

Herman R. Lantz and Eloise C. Snyder, Marriage: An Examination of the Man-Woman Relationship, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969)

APPENDIX F

Seven Basic Causes of Divorce

1. The "Victim" Divorce

The victim divorce is a setting where one mate leaves the home for another person. It may be a secretary, close friend, new friend, etc. The results are the same. One person wants the divorce while the other person does not. The mate left behind may suffer feelings of rejection, guilt, worthlessness and despair that can soon turn into anger and revenge. Hostility toward the ex-spouse is usually the highest in the victim divorce.

2. The "Problem" Divorce

The reason for this kind of divorce is because of a "problem" the other mate had. Common problems are alcohol, gambling, money, or sex. Some people bring their problems into the marriage with them while other problems are created within and because of the marriage. Spousal feelings in this kind of divorce run from sympathy for the ex-mate to the regret that so many years were given to this kind of existence. The person with the problem may feel anger and hostility at being "abandoned."

3. The "Little Boy, Little Girl" Divorce

This divorce is prompted by the fact that one mate or the other decides that they don't want the responsibility of being husband or wife, or mother or father. They decide that they want to spend their time with the "boys" or the "girls" and play with the kind of toys they played with before marriage. The only difference is the price of the toys. Personal immaturity and the lack of learning to assume responsibility brings on

the divorce. Feelings here are centered in rejection.

4. The "I Was Conned" Divorce

In simplest terms, this means that one mate or the other did not get what they thought they were getting in the marriage. The inability of one person to be honest with the other often leads to disillusionment and divorce later. This kind of divorce usually leads to a defensiveness toward the ex-spouse and a general distrust of the opposite sex.

5. The "Shotgun" Divorce

Most people have heard of the "shotgun" wedding. It is usually initiated by the fact that the bride-to-be is pregnant and family, friends, and community feel the honorable way to resolve the problem is by marriage. In many instance, shotgun weddings bring about shotgun divorces. Shotgun marriages involve living under the gun for both parties and marriage by coercion doesn't always work too well. Feelings for the ex-spouse in this divorce setting run from pity to rejection.

6. The "Menopause" Divorce

We know that women go through menopause but there is a growing belief in some medical circles that men go through some kind of state similar to menopause in women. In both sexes, dramatic changes in personality and behavior can cause one mate or the other to leave the marriage. Attitudes toward the ex-spouse after this kind of divorce are centered in lack of understanding and a general confusion as to what really happened. Because this can happen after many years of marriage, a deep hurt and bitterness is coupled to an abandoned feeling.

7. The "No Fault" Divorce

A few years ago, divorcing parties had to state the causes for the

divorce. Charges and counter charges were filed. Witnesses were brought forth to testify to the truth or lack of it. With the changing divorce laws in many states, there is no cause or reason needed. No one is held at fault. Often, two people just decide that they have had it with each other. They want to go their separate ways. Feelings in this kind of divorce are usually very neutral. They feel it just didn't work out and it wasn't anyone's fault.

Source:

Jim Smoke, Growing Through Divorce (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1976), pp. 36-38.

APPENDIX G

Fisher's Four Types of Divorced Persons

In Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends, Bruce Fisher describes a person who decides to end the marriage as the "dumper" and the person who had it ended as the "dumpee." The "dumper" says things like this: "I need some time and space to get my head on straight. I need to be out of this relationship in order to get this time and space. I care for you, but I don't love you in the way I should to live with you. Don't ask me why I don't love you, because I don't know. I just know my priorities at this time are to go out by myself, to find myself. I feel badly for hurting you but there is nothing I can do about that, because staying here with you would also hurt you. I want out."

"Dumpees" say things like this: "Why don't you love me? Please don't leave me. Just tell me what is wrong, give me some time to change, and I will become what you want me to become. There must be something wrong with me and if you would just tell me what it is, I would change. I didn't realize there was anything wrong with the marriage. I thought everything was going well. We have so much to lose, don't leave now. Just give me some time and everything will be okay."

Obviously, the two are operating out of two different sets of emotional needs and priorities. Fisher goes on to break these two categories down into good and bad dumpers and good and bad dumpees.

The "good dumper" is a person who has tried to work on the marriage and to communicate and work through the conflicts and probably was willing to go for marriage counseling. He or she realizes that the

relationship was destructive to both people. The good dumper realizes that it is better to end the unhealthy relationship than to continue to destroy each other. The good dumper has the strength and courage to end the marriage and to hurt the person he or she was in love with.

The "bad dumpers" are very similar to runaway kids. The bad dumper believes that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, and that if he or she can just get across the fence and out of the marriage, everything will be okay. The bad dumper often has another lover waiting in the wings. The bad dumper has trouble dealing with feelings and tends to avoid dealing with the issues he or she needs to deal with.

The "good dumpee" is the person who has tried to work on the relationship, and usually is an open and honest person who is quite willing to communicate. Again, the good dumpee may have been willing to go for marriage counseling if that were appropriate. The good dumpee seldom has any outside affairs. But the good dumpee is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time when the dumper begins to feel the internal pressure and the explosion takes place, motivating the dumper to leave.

The "bad dumpee" is a person who wants out of the relationship but doesn't have the courage and strength to be the person who decides to leave. Thus, he or she makes life so miserable for the other person that they are forced to be a dumper and leave the marriage.

As you think about which category you fall into, several things need to be kept in mind:

1. Very few people are purely one or the other. You'll probably see yourself more in one category, but you're probably a mixture of both good and bad.

2. The "dumper" is not necessarily the one who files for divorce. The dumper-dumpee question depends upon who decided to end the relationship.
3. The concept of dumper and dumpee does not necessarily mean that the dumper is any more responsible for the failure of the marriage than the dumpee is. It takes two people to make a relationship work, and the responsibility is usually 50/50.

Source:

Bruce Fisher, Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends (San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact, 1981), pp. 42-54.

APPENDIX H

Five Stages of Grief

Until we have actually grieved, we will probably continue to hang onto our ex-spouse instead of letting go. Fisher describes the grief process in terms of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's familiar five stages of grief.

Stage One - DENIAL We go numb and deny any feelings we may be having. We repress our anger and become depressed.

Stage Two - ANGER We begin to accept the ending of the relationship and allow ourselves to feel angry. This is a period when the frustrations that have been building during the marriage suddenly come out. We go to great lengths to convince others how terrible our partner was to us.

Stage Three - BARGAINING We begin to face the fact that the relationship is ending and we are reluctant to let go, so we start bargaining.

Stage Four - DEPRESSION This is the final letting go of the relationship and is the darkness before the dawn. Because this stage sometimes comes so long after the actual separation, some are surprised to feel so low and depressed again.

Stage Five - ACCEPTANCE We have begun to feel inner peace, to feel free from the emotional pain of grief, to feel no need to invest emotionally in the past relationship either in terms of anger or love.

Source:

Bruce Fisher, Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends (San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact, 1981),

APPENDIX I

Why Divorce Is Potentially
Damaging to Children

Your divorce may or may not have come as a relief. In either case, your children's perspective is vastly different; so is their ability to cope with it. Archibald Hart lists seven reasons why divorce is potentially damaging to children:

1. It signals the collapse of the family structure--the child feels alone and very frightened. The loneliness can be acute and long remembered.
2. Parents have a diminished capacity to parent. They are preoccupied with their own emotions and survival during the critical months (or years) of the divorce.
3. The divorce creates conflicts of loyalty in the children. Whose side do they take? Often children feel pulled by love and loyalty in both directions.
4. Uncertainty about the future causes deep-seated insecurity. Being dependent mainly on one parent creates a great deal of anxiety.
5. The anger and resentment between the parents, which is so prevalent in most divorces, creates intense fear in the child. The younger the child, the more damaging this climate of anger can be.
6. The children take upon themselves much anxiety over their parents. They worry intensely about their mother in particular, with the departure of the father (or the mother, in those rarer cases where it is the wife who leaves) being a terrifying event.
7. If the family moves, a child may lose an at-home parent, a home, a

school, neighborhood, church, and friends.

These and other factors cause divorce to be a crisis for children that only begins with the judge's decree. It is a process that you can help your child work through but only if you are willing to recognize its impact on him or her.

Source:

Archibald D. Hart, Children and Divorce: What to Expect, How to Help (Waco, TX: Word, 1982)

APPENDIX J

Disciplining Children

Roger and Darlene Duncan suggest parents ask themselves the following questions before they discipline their children:

1. Does the punishment fit the crime? Is the punishment too harsh for the "crime" that was committed?
2. Is the child really aware of what he or she did wrong? Did they violate a rule that is well known and understood?
3. Do my expectations for my child take into account his or her age and level of maturity?
4. Am I punishing the child in front of others for a particular reason such as to teach others a lesson, to prove who is "boss," to show others that I am a "good parent?"
5. Is the discipline appropriate at this time, or am I acting because I am frustrated, unhappy, and overwhelmed with everything?
6. Am I mad because my child embarrassed me?

Source:

T. Roger and Darlene Duncan, You're Divorced, But Your Children Aren't (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979)

Other suggested reading:

Christian Living in the Home by Jay Adams (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972)

The Strong-Willed Child by James Dobson (Tyndale, 1978)

Hide or Seek, Self-Esteem for the Child by James Dobson (Revell, 1974)

Dare To Discipline by James Dobson (Tyndale, 1970)

- Preparing for Adolescence by James Dobson (Vision House, 1978)
- The Parents Book About Divorce by Richard Gardner (Bantam, 1977)
- Help! I'm A Parent by Bruce Narramore (Zondervan, 1972)
- An Ounce of Prevention by Bruce Narramore (Zondervan, 1973)
- How To Parent by Fitzhugh Dodson (Signet, 1970)
- Heaven Help the Home by Howard Hendricks (Victor, 1973)
- The People You Live With by O. Quentin Hyder (Revell, 1975)
- What Is A Family? by Edith Shaeffer (Revell, 1975)
- How To Parent Alone: A Guide for Single Parents by Joan Bel Geddes (Seabury, 1974)
- How To Really Love Your Teenager by Ross Campbell (Victor, 1981)
- Going It Alone by Robert Weiss (Basic Books, 1979)

APPENDIX K
Questionnaire

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

OCCUPATION _____

NAMES AND AGES OF YOUR CHILDREN:

HOW LONG SINCE YOUR DIVORCE WAS FINAL?

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

PLEASE LIST ANY PROBLEMS OR ISSUES YOU'D LIKE TO DISCUSS DURING THE WORKSHOP.

IN GENERAL, WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH DURING THE WORKSHOP?

APPENDIX L

The Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale

HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMPLETING THIS SCALE ACCURATELY

NOTE: Please use No. 2 pencil to fill out computer answer sheet. Your answer sheet is coded with a number to insure confidentiality.

STEP 1. Print your name, address, city, zip code, date, and phone on the answer sheet.

STEP 2. YOUR AGE. Write in your age vertically to the left of the equal signs, and darken the appropriate spaces as shown in the example below.

EXAMPLE:

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
9	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

STEP 3. MONTHS SEPARATED. Decide which of your love-relationships that have ended or are ending that you will be thinking of when you complete this Scale. On the answer sheet write vertically to the left of the equal signs how many months you have separated. Darken the appropriate spaces. See examples below.

EXAMPLES:

<u>Not separated</u>											<u>Separated less than 10 months</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	0	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
0	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	3	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

<u>Separated over 10 months</u>										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
9	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=

STEP 4. PERSONAL DATA. Read the following statements and mark your response on the answer sheet by darkening the appropriate space.

A. I am

1. female
2. male

B. I am thinking of the following love-relationship that has ended or is ending while I complete this Scale (Recheck STEP 3 above).

1. my recent marriage
2. my recent living-together love-relationship
3. my recent non-living together love-relationship
4. other

- C. My legal status in this love relationship is
1. not applicable
 2. not separated
 3. separated by no one has filed
 4. one or both of us has filed
 5. legally separated
 6. final decree has been granted
- D. I was in this love relationship
1. less than one year
 2. one to five years
 3. six to ten years
 4. eleven to fifteen years
 5. more than fifteen years
- E. Our yearly joint income was
1. not applicable
 2. less than \$5,000
 3. \$5,001 to \$15,000
 4. \$15,001 to \$25,000
 5. more than \$25,000
- F. We had the following number of children from this love-relationship
1. none
 2. one
 3. two or more
- G. The custody of these children is (mark more than one if necessary)
1. in my custody
 2. in his/her custody
 3. we have joint custody
 4. children are separated with split custody
 5. children are of legal age
 6. no children
- H. I have used these professional services to help adjust to the ending of this love-relationship (mark more than one if necessary)
1. none
 2. divorce adjustment class
 3. personal growth classes or workshops
 4. individual or group therapy
 5. counseling with minister, priest, or rabbi
 6. other.
- I. Who decided to end this love-relationship?
1. I did
 2. S/he did
 3. mutual decision

J. I have been married (include important living-together love-relationships)

1. once
2. twice
3. three or more times
4. never

K. My parents

1. did not separate and/or divorce
2. separated and/or divorced when I was under thirteen years of age
3. separated and/or divorced when I was a teenager
4. separated and/or divorced after I became of legal age
5. other

L. I am presently

1. remarried
2. in a living-together love-relationship
3. in a non-living-together love-relationship
4. not in an important love-relationship

M. My level of education is

1. did not complete high school
2. high school graduate
3. vocational training and/or attended college
4. college degree
5. college graduate degree

N. I belong to the following race

1. Caucasian
2. Negroid
3. Spanish-American
4. Oriental
5. Other

STEP 5. The following statements are feelings and attitudes that people frequently experience while they are ending a love-relationship. Keeping in mind the love-relationship you checked in STEP 3 above, read each statement and decide how frequently the statement applies to your present feelings and attitudes. Mark your response on your answer sheet. Do not leave any statements blank on your answer sheet. If the statement is not appropriate for you in your present situation, answer the way you feel you might if that statement were appropriate.

The five responses to choose from on the answer sheet are:

- 1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

1. I am comfortable telling people I am separated from my love-partner.
2. I am physically and emotionally exhausted from morning until night.

- 1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never
3. I am constantly thinking of my former love-partner.
4. I feel rejected by many of the friends I had when I was in the love-relationship.
5. I become upset when I think about my former love-partner.
6. I like being the person I am.
7. I feel like crying because I feel so sad.
8. I can communicate with my former love-partner in a calm and rational manner.
9. There are many things about my personality I would like to change.
10. It is easy for me to accept my becoming a single person.
11. I feel depressed.
12. I feel emotionally separated from my former love-partner.
13. People would not like me if they got to know me.
14. I feel comfortable seeing and talking to my former love-partner.
15. I feel like I am an attractive person.
16. I feel as though I am in a daze and the world doesn't seem real.
17. I find myself doing things just to please my former love-partner.
18. I feel lonely.
19. There are many things about my body I would like to change.
20. I have many plans and goals for the future.
21. I feel I don't have much sex appeal.
22. I am relating and interacting in many new ways with people since my separation.
23. Joining a singles' group would make me feel I was a loser like them.
24. It is easy for me to organize my daily routine of living.
25. I find myself making excuses to see and talk to my former love-partner

1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

26. Because my love relationship failed, I must be a failure.
27. I feel like unloading my feelings of anger and hurt upon my former love-partner.
28. I feel comfortable being with people.
29. I have trouble concentrating.
30. I think of my former love-partner as related to me rather than as a separate person.
31. I feel like an okay person.
32. I hope my former love-partner is feeling as much or more emotional pain than I am.
33. I have close friends who know and understand me.
34. I am unable to control my emotions.
35. I feel capable of building a deep and meaningful love-relationship.
36. I have trouble sleeping.
37. I easily become angry at my former love-partner.
38. I am afraid to trust people who might become love-partners.
39. Because my love-relationship ended, I feel there must be something wrong with me.
40. I either have no appetite or eat continuously which is unusual for me.
41. I don't want to accept the fact that our love-relationship is ending.
42. I force myself to eat even though I'm not hungry.
43. I have given up on my former love-partner and I getting back together.
44. I feel very frightened inside.
45. It is important that my family, friends, and associates be on my side rather than on my former love-partner's side.
46. I feel uncomfortable even thinking about dating.
47. I feel capable of living the kind of life I would like to live.

1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

- 48. I have noticed my body weight is changing a great deal.
- 49. I believe if we try, my love-partner and I can save our love=relationship.
- 50. My abdomen feels empty and hollow.
- 51. I have feelings of romantic love for my former love-partner.
- 52. I can make the decisions I need to because I know and trust my feelings.
- 53. I would like to get even with my former love-partner for hurting me.
- 54. I avoid people even though I want and need friends.
- 55. I have really made a mess of my life.
- 56. I sigh a lot.
- 57. I believe it is best for all concerned to have our love-relationship end.
- 58. I perform my daily activities in a mechanical and unfeeling manner.
- 59. I become upset when I think about my love-partner having a love=relationship with someone else.
- 60. I feel capable of facing and dealing with my problems.
- 61. I blame my former love-partner for the failure of our love=relationship.
- 62. I am afraid of becoming sexually involved with another person.
- 63. I feel adequate as a fe/male love-partner.
- 64. It will only be a matter of time until my love-partner and I get back together.
- 65. I feel detached and removed from activities around me as though I were watching them on a movie screen.
- 66. I would like to continue having a sexual relationship with my former love-partner.
- 67. Life is somehow passing me by.

1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

- 68. I feel comfortable going by myself to a public place such as a movie.
- 69. It is good to feel alive again after having felt numb and emotionally dead.
- 70. I feel I know and understand myself.
- 71. I feel emotionally committed to my former love-partner.
- 72. I want to be with people but I feel emotionally distant from them.
- 73. I am the type of person I would like to have for a friend.
- 74. I am afraid of becoming emotionally close to another love-partner.
- 75. Even on the days when I am feeling good, I may suddenly become sad and start crying.
- 76. I can't believe our love-relationship is ending.
- 77. I become upset when I think about my love-partner dating someone else.
- 78. I feel I have a normal amount of self-confidence.
- 79. People seem to enjoy being with me.
- 80. Morally and spiritually, I believe it is wrong for our love-relationship to end.
- 81. I wake up in the morning feeling there is no good reason to get out of bed.
- 82. I find myself daydreaming about all the good times I had with my love-partner.
- 83. People want to have a love-relationship with me because I feel like a loveable person.
- 84. I want to hurt my former love-partner by letting him/her know how much I hurt emotionally.
- 85. I feel comfortable going to social events even though I am single.
- 86. I feel guilty about my love-relationship ending.
- 87. I feel emotionally insecure.

1) almost always 2) usually 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) almost never

88. I feel uncomfortable even thinking about having a sexual relationship.
89. I feel emotionally weak and helpless.
90. I think about ending my life with suicide.
91. I understand the reasons why our love-relationship did not work out.
92. I feel comfortable having my friends know our love-relationship is ending.
93. I am angry about the things my former love-partner has been doing.
94. I feel like I am going crazy.
95. I am unable to perform sexually.
96. I feel as though I am the only single person in a couples-only society.
97. I feel like a single person rather than a married person.
98. I feel my friends look at me as unstable now that I'm separated.
99. I daydream about being with and talking to my former love-partner.
100. I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a wo/man.

THE END

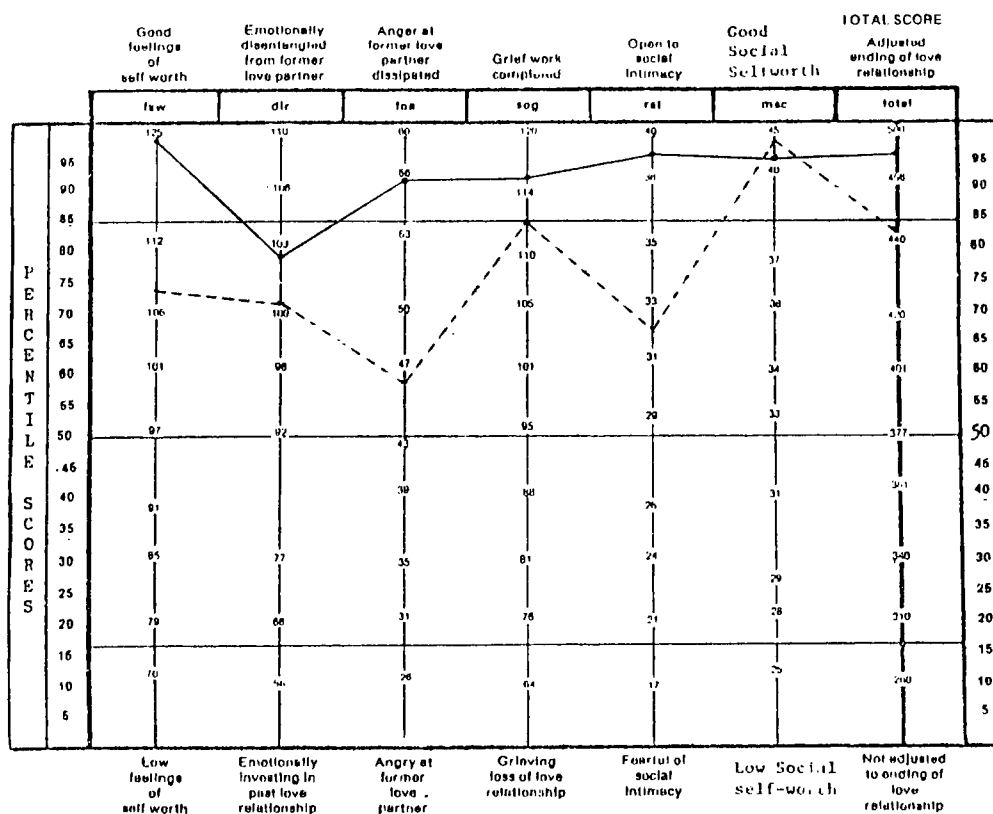
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APPENDIX M

Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale Results

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE PROFILE						
Name:	Ann		#	Facilitator: Harper		
St. Address:				City:		
Pre-Test	April 85	State:		Zip		Post-Test Aug. 85

The higher your score, the more you approach the values at the top of the profile graph.
The lower your score, the more you approach the values at the bottom of the profile graph.
Further explanation of your scores is also given on the reverse side of this page.



low scores	low	dir	foa	sog	rat	msc	total/gain
post test	124	102	58	115	39	41	479
pre test	108	100	46	112	32	44	442
							+37

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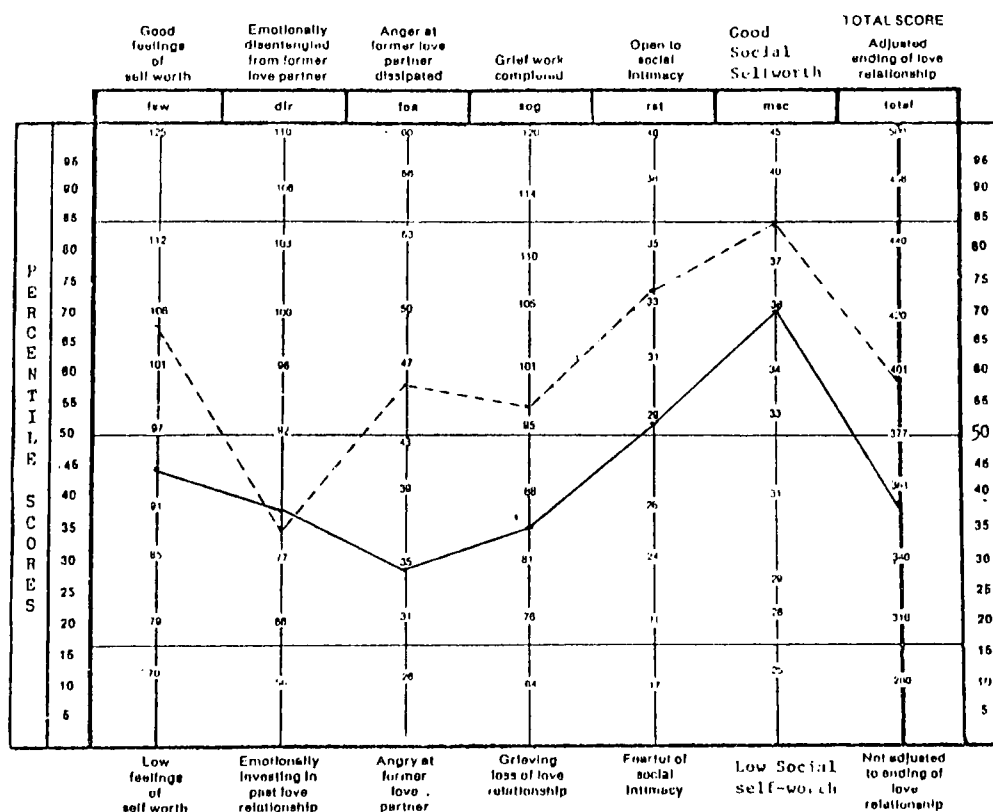
Broken line = pre-test

Solid line = post-test

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE PROFILE

Name: Carol	Facilitator: Harper
St. Address:	City:
Pre-Test April 85	Post-Test Aug. 85

The higher your score, the more you approach the values at the top of the profile graph.
The lower your score, the more you approach the values at the bottom of the profile graph.
Further explanation of your scores is also given on the reverse side of this page.



raw scores	few	dir	lea	sog	rat	mac	total/gain
post test	94	81	35	84	29	36	359
pre test	104	80	46	97	33	38	398
							-39

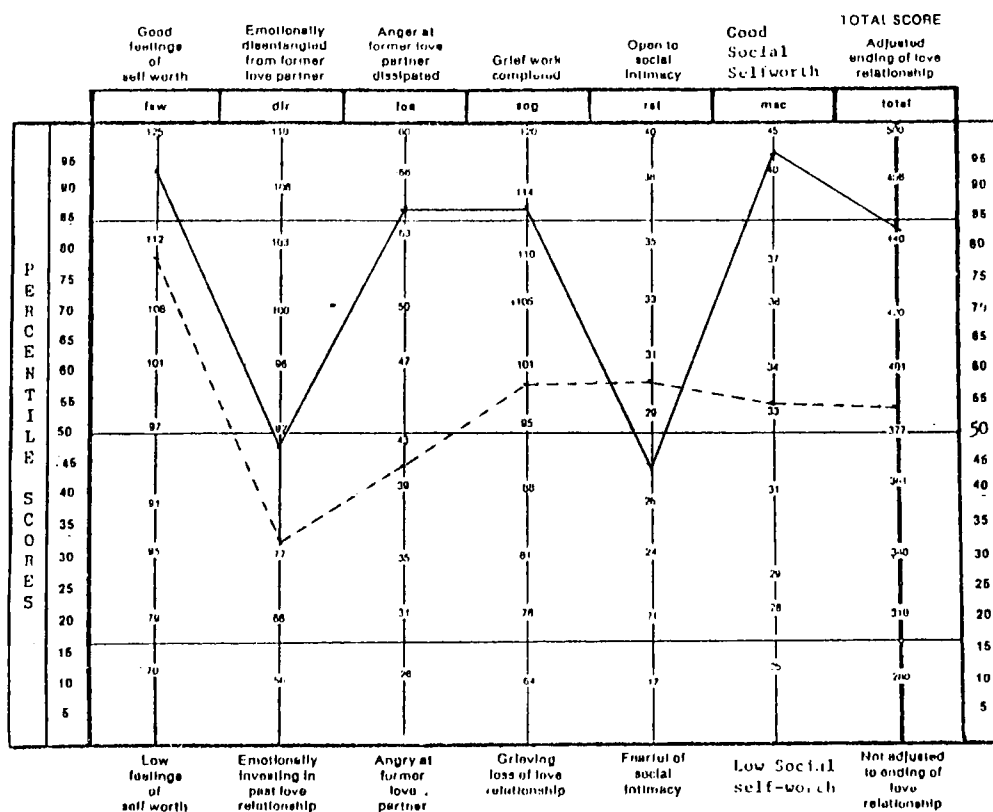
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Broken line = pre-test

Solid line = post-test

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE PROFILE						
Name	Esther		#	Facilitator: Harper		
St. Address:			City:			
Pre-Test	April 85	State:	Zip	Post-Test	Aug. 85	

The higher your score, the more you approach the values at the top of the profile graph.
 The lower your score, the more you approach the values at the bottom of the profile graph.
 Further explanation of your scores is also given on the reverse side of this page.



raw scores	few	dir	los	sog	rst	mac	total/gain
post test	119	90	54	113	27	41	444
pre test	110	78	40	98	30	33	389
							+55

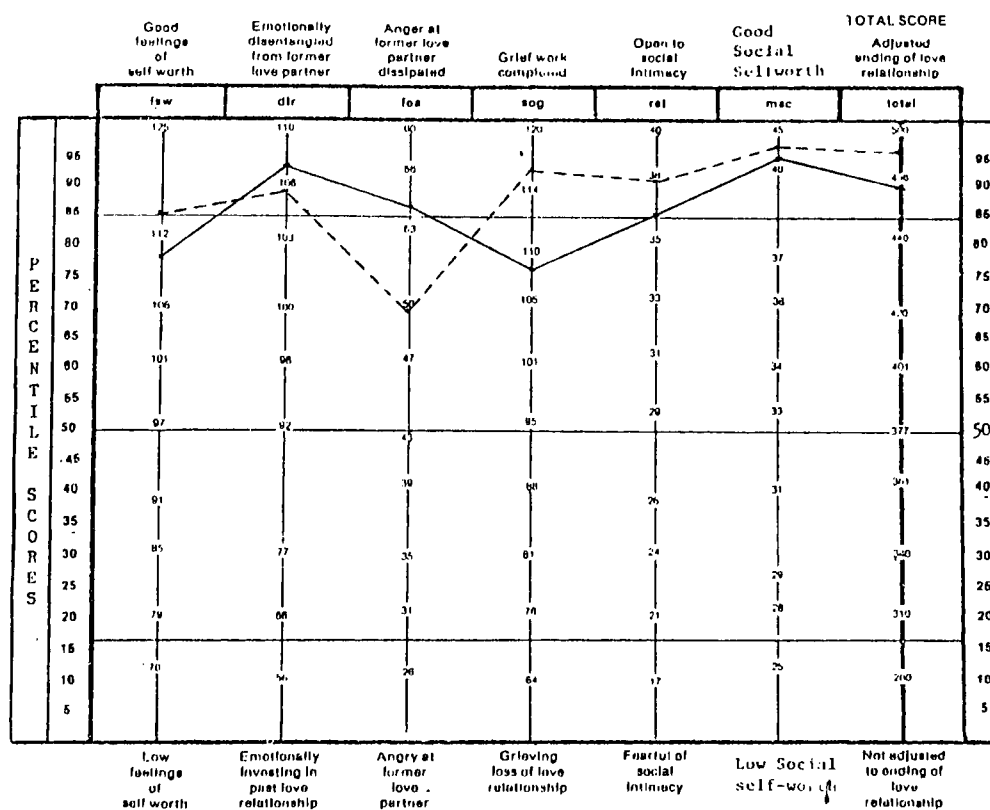
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Broken line = pre-test

Solid line = post-test

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE PROFILE							
Name Joan			#		Facilitator: Harper		
St. Address:				City:			
Pre-Test April 85		State:		Zip:		Post-Test Aug. 85	

The higher your score, the more you approach the values at the top of the profile graph.
 The lower your score, the more you approach the values at the bottom of the profile graph.
 Further explanation of your scores is also given on the reverse side of this page.



raw scores	few	dir	los	sog	rel	msc	total/gain
post test	110	107	54	108	36	41	456
pre test	114	106	50	115	38	43	466
							-10

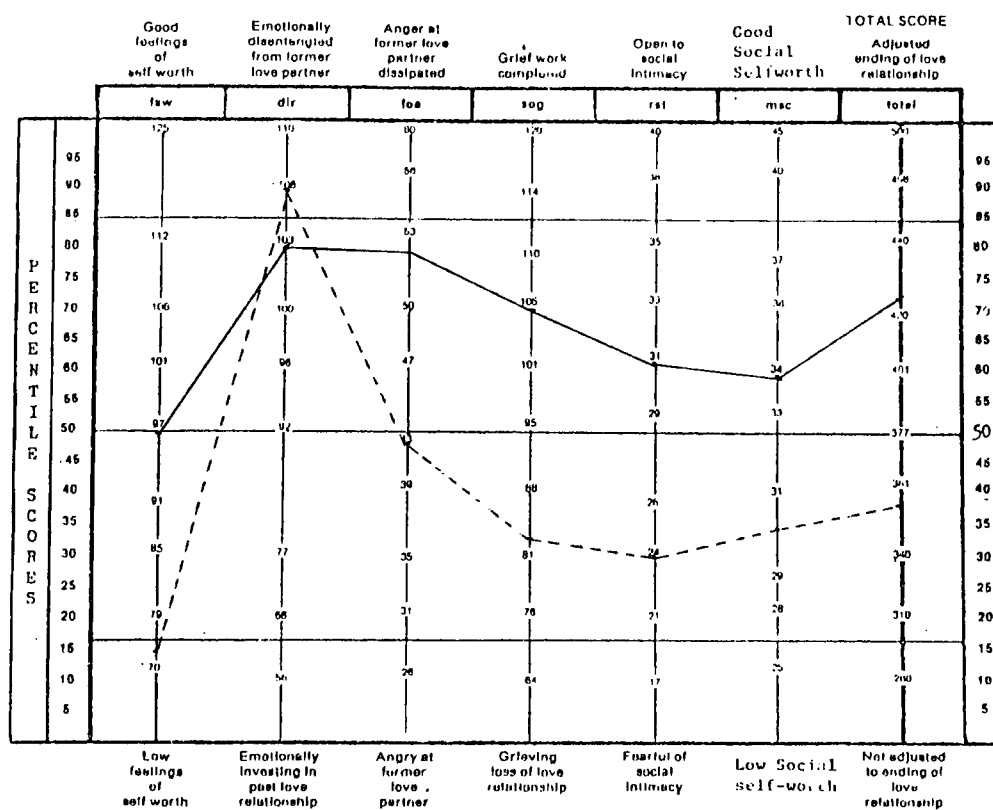
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Broken line = pre-test

Solid line = post-test

FISHER DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT SCALE PROFILE						
Name	Mary			#	Facilitator: Harper	
St. Address:				City:		
Pre-Test	April 85	State:		Zip:		Post-Test Aug. 85

The higher your score, the more you approach the values at the top of the profile graph.
The lower your score, the more you approach the values at the bottom of the profile graph.
Further explanation of your scores is also given on the reverse side of this page.



raw scores	few	dir	lea	sog	rst	mac	total/gain
post test	97	103	52	105	31	34	422
pre test	72	106	43	82	24	30	357
							+65

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Broken line = pre-test

Solid line = post-test

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